

# THE SMART SET

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# A SENSE OF HUMOR

By Cosmo Hamilton

“ANOTHER cup of coffee, please,” said Billy Hutton, in his most cheerful voice, “and one lump of——”

The beautiful Mrs. Archibald Hay raised a long, white, pointed finger. “Hush!” she said; “I possess a memory.”

Hutton’s voice became almost tender, and he gave his host’s wife a look in which there was very genuine admiration.

“You’re an emporium of everything that’s excellent. Shall I give you a kidney?”

Mrs. Hay made a long arm, and put a brimming cup of coffee near Hutton’s elbow.

“Obviously,” she said, “*your* memory is a very flabby thing! I never take kidneys. Now, even from a fortnight spent under the same roof, I know that you hate tea for breakfast——”

“Wonderful!”

“—that you never indulge in more than one lump of sugar——”

“Marvelous!”

“—being in a constant state of fear of encroaching flesh——”

“Too true!” cried Hutton, with a laugh which made the rafters ring.

“—that you *must* have a whiskey-and-soda at eleven, in order to look optimistically upon the world——”

“Right again!”

“—and that it is quite impossible for you to retire for the night without a mild cigar in a scorching bath.”

Hutton was in the act of passing the toast-rack. His arm became arrested in mid-air, and his thick, dark eyebrows rose high. “How the dickens

do you know that?” he asked, profoundly astonished.

Before Mrs. Hay replied, she picked up several crumbs, and dropped them carefully into her plate. “I have seen little mountains of your ash,” she said, with a very pleasant touch of reproof in her voice, “making a pattern on the bath-mat.”

“By Jove! I’m sorry. Toast?”

“I always eat bread, Billy dear.”

Hutton dropped the toast-rack, and pounced on a roll. “Of course you do. I hadn’t forgotten.”

Mrs. Hay laughed. It was the nearest thing to the song of a thrush which Hutton had ever heard. “What ingenious word do you call it by, then?”

“I only just didn’t happen to remember, that’s all.”

And then they both laughed—Mrs. Hay, because she was amused at the man’s bad logic, and Hutton, because he was amused at her amusement, and because her laugh was infectious.

He got up, crossed the room, and lowered the blind over one of the diamond-paned windows through which a shaft of sun had found its way and, having discovered Mrs. Hay, had been only too content to nestle into her hair. Absurd as it may seem, there was something of jealousy in Hutton’s action.

“Thank you,” said Mrs. Hay.

“You’re a delicious thing,” said Hutton, leaning over her chair.

With a little laugh, she raised her hand as a barrier, and in this way proved herself to be, if any proof were needed, an honor to her sex. “Too early, Billy,” she said.

“Oh, bother! As if it’s ever too early. *Please!*”

The barrier was still there, but the laugh still played at the corners of her mouth. "Kisses and breakfast don't go well together."

Hutton's astonishment found vent in a kind of gasp. He backed away from her, and stood staring.

"I don't believe you mean that," he said. "I don't believe it's possible for you to mean that."

Mrs. Hay held her head sideways, and looked at him out of the corners of her very beautiful eyes. "Oh, but I do," she replied.

"Then your knowledge of breakfasts is, if you will forgive my saying so, deplorably out of date. I think it's only charitable on my part to prove how well they go together."

"Hutton on Breakfasts," she laughed. "You must present me with a copy."

Her husband's old friend stood by her chair again. "I'll give you the whole edition for a single kiss."

"Ought they to be fried on toast, or deviled?"

Hutton put his hands into the pockets of his duck coat. A slightly sulky line was perceptible under his carefully curled mustache. "You're awfully wordy, this morning," he said.

Mrs. Hay pushed her chair away from the table, and rose to her feet. Hutton was a tall man, as men go, but Mrs. Hay, as she stood in front of him, appeared to be but a shade of an inch shorter. She ran her finger lightly from one to another brass button on his coat, and spoke slowly, with an effortless, musical drawl.

"My dear, impetuous Billy, a back-water is one thing, but a breakfast-room is quite another. I am no prude. At the same time, I have a great respect for the feelings of my servants. You see, they know that you are my husband's best friend, and, although they might overlook a quiet, moonlight kiss, I'm certain they'd put the worst interpretation on an early-morning one."

The sulky line around Hutton's mouth developed. "You're precious cautious about nothing, all of a sud-

den. What on earth is the world coming to, if a man can't be—chummy with his friend's wife?"

Mrs. Hay put her hands behind her, lifted her rounded chin, and looked at Billy under her eyelashes. "What would you say, my friend, if you caught my husband kissing your wife?"

"I never should."

"Why?"

"It's impossible."

"Why?"

"Well, simply because my wife is not that type of woman."

"What!" cried Mrs. Hay, with a sudden angry spot on each cheek.

Hutton added, with precipitation, "I mean to say, she doesn't kiss. It doesn't appeal to her."

"How do you know," she returned, still angry, "that it appeals to me?"

Hutton then showed that the diplomatic service had lost a shining light. "It's only too obvious that it doesn't," he said, calmly.

Mrs. Hay's anger died a sudden death. Her face dimpled, and she held it slightly up. "Is it?" she asked.

"By George, it isn't!" And he kissed her suddenly.

## II

WHEREUPON, Viola Hay turned swiftly on her heel, and made her way to the veranda.

The doorway improvised a frame for her. Her beautiful figure, in its close-fitting white frock, was picked out like a silver point against the flaming border of flowers that ran around the bungalow. Beyond this rainbow, the lawn, cut close, stretched on a slight incline down to the bank of the Thames. The river, wide and dignified at this point, looked like a broad band of silver. On the other bank, in thick clumps, stood old trees, their twisted limbs shaded from the sun by their leaves, among which birds built their nests, launched their families into the world, and died. Beyond these, a series of meadows stretched, cut into uneven shapes by thick hedges which flung their shad-



ows across the grass. Over everything the sun spread his smile, and in the air danced myriads of shimmering specks, and the throbbing voices of larks filled the world with music.

For some minutes, Hutton stood watching Mrs. Hay. Something of the beauty of the scene seemed to have got into his blood. When he spoke, it was in a low voice, such as one uses in a cathedral.

"Let's go before the others come down," he said.

Mrs. Hay turned to him with a smile. Perhaps, under the circumstances, it was not unnatural that she took his lowered voice as a compliment to herself.

"My dear boy, please don't be so energetic. Do you know, for a change, I really think I shall wait and give poor Archie his coffee?"

"Dash it!" cried Hutton, "what have I got up for, then?"

"The pleasure of a tête-à-tête breakfast."

"The pleasure of having you to myself the entire morning, you mean. Do come, Vi. Oh, hang it, do come! You're so heavenly to look at that I shall crush the life out of you in a minute! And those blessed servants will be dodging in directly."

"And find me lifeless on the mat," laughed Viola, touching her hair expertly with her hand, "to say nothing of Peg. Poor Peg! I wonder if she cares the least bit for you, Billy."

"Cares for me!" echoed Hutton. "Of course she does. But she's all right. She's a good pal, and she lets me do as I like. She's a sensible little woman."

"Is she? I wonder. I think she rather underrated the attractions of other women."

Hutton tapped a cigarette impatiently on its case. "Oh, well, she never had any cause for complaint since she married me. I've flirted every now and then; but, hang it, she knows there has never been any danger in it."

A rather peculiar smile played round the lips of Mrs. Hay.

"Never any danger? And now, Billy, can you grow fond of me, do you think, without any danger?"

Hutton seized her hand, and carried it to his lips. His dark eyes blazed.

"Danger be hanged!" he said; "you're divine!"

Drawing her hand away, with a little, rippling laugh, Mrs. Hay crossed the room and rang the bell.

"My sunshade, please. You shall punt me up the backwater if you think you would care to do so."

She picked up a large garden hat, a poppy-laden thing, and fastened it on her head.

"What a scrumptious hat!" said Hutton, collecting the sunshade and an armful of cushions. "By George! you're the best-dressed woman I've ever seen. How do you do it?"

"Rather a strong artistic tendency, assisted by a good credit balance."

A servant entered.

"Bring the second breakfast, and let Major Hay and Mrs. Hutton know when it's ready."

Before the servant had left the room, Viola was on the veranda. Hutton joined her eagerly, and together they made their way to the lawn.

"Now, Billy," she said, "do learn to hold a sunshade in the direction of the sun."

"If I do that, I can't see your face."

"Then you must wait till you're in the punt. I can't have my skin spoiled because you can't see my face. . . . Really, Billy, what would Peg say, if she saw you looking at one like that?"

Hutton dropped a cushion, and kicked it hard. It lay, a soft, scarlet spot, on the green lawn ahead of them.

"I dunno, and I don't care! I can't think of anything but your beauty. I've forgotten everybody who was in my life a fortnight ago. I can't see or think further than you."

Mrs. Hay conveyed a patronizing sense of pleasure by resting her hand lightly on Hutton's arm.

"Dear old Billy! What a romantic person, isn't he?"

"Do hurry," said Hutton.

"My dear, I *am* hurrying."

"You hurry so slowly."

"That's philosophy."

Hutton arrived at the cushion, and gave it another kick toward the boat-house.

"It may be philosophy, but it's dashed annoying," he said.

### III

BEFORE Mrs. Hay's laugh had quite died away, Major Hay hurried into the room, gave a swift glance about, noticed with anger the remains of two breakfasts, and made his way quickly to the veranda. The only thing the pleasant landscape contained, so far as he was aware, were the figures of his wife and his best friend, the former moving with her own peculiar grace, the latter striding along by her side, holding a parasol over her, kicking a cushion along. Hay clenched his fists, and swore loudly.

"Hullo, hullo, hullo! That's pretty language for so early in the morning. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, to be cross on such a too utterly perfect day, Archie?"

Mrs. Billy Hutton stood in the middle of the room, looking as fresh and sweet as a primrose.

Hay turned to her with a forced smile, and took her outstretched hand with a cordial deference. "I'm not cross," he said, "not I!"

"Oh!" she said, "what was the meaning, then, of that old-established little word?"

"Fact is, I was too late to catch Viola. For your sake, I assure you. So afraid you'll have too much of me."

"That's not possible, dear man. You're so suitable to the temperature. You never make one feel too hot, and you never make one feel too cold."

"Really!"

"And yet you're always doing something. Now, Viola looks so cool, so undisturbed, so pale in this heat, that she positively disconcerts me."

Hay's eyes still followed the retreating figures, and his hands were still

clenched. But he managed to fill his voice with a casual lightness which he thought would hide his feelings.

"How do you look when you're disconcerted?" he asked.

"My face gets sunburned, and my hair grows limp and uncurled."

"Oh, no, never!"

Mrs. Billy followed the direction of Hay's eyes. She looked quickly from the two figures to her host. She noticed with a quick sympathy and understanding the anger and jealousy he tried so politely to hide, and the clenched, nervous hands that betrayed the true state of his mind.

Hutton had arranged the cushions in the punt, and was handing Mrs. Hay into it tenderly. Hay stood watching everything with compressed lips, and his eyes screwed up. He didn't move or attempt to speak until the red sunshade turned into the bend of the river and was hidden by the bank.

In her turn, Mrs. Billy watched Hay. She saw the suppressed rage in his well-cut, soldierly face, and in the lines round his mouth, and she came to the conclusion that it would be necessary for her to use all the tact she possessed at all moments of the day, in order to prevent friction between these two men.

Opportunately, the servants came in and rearranged the table, and placed the fresh breakfast. The delightful aroma of hot coffee pervaded everything.

Mrs. Billy made a little dash at the table, and sat down.

"Breakfast!" she cried, with brisk cheerfulness. "Archie, not to put too fine a point on it, I starve, I literally starve!"

Hay gave a sigh, and shook himself. "That won't do at all," he said, with a brave attempt to catch her tone. "Now, then, shall it be deviled bones?"

"Deviled bones — to a starving female?"

"Omelet, then?"

Mrs. Billy laid a dainty hand upon the coffee-urn.

"What kind of omelet?"

Hay bent over it. "The usual kind of omelet. Egg, more egg, and still more egg."

Mrs. Billy laughed. It was a different kind of laugh from Mrs. Archie's. There was something of the timbre of the bell in it. "I know it. The insular omelet—unoriginal, but safe. Quite a lot, please. You have coffee, don't you?"

Hay nodded. "Coffee, thanks, yes. Really, Mrs. Billy, your briskness on this extremely sultry morning puts me to shame. I feel I must emulate you."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Billy, pouring out coffee with one hand, and milk with the other, with a deftness born of much practice. "Strike out a line for yourself. Attack the bones. One lump, I think?"

"How well you know my eccentricities!"

"Well, you see, ten breakfasts——"

"Eight luncheons," added Hay, with a touch of grimness.

"Seven teas——"

"Five dinners."

"Six, I think," he corrected.

"Six dinners," she continued, banteringly, "alone with the same man, give a woman an excellent opportunity of getting to know his little ways—almost as excellent as if she were married to him."

"More excellent," said Hay, gloomily.

"More excellent," laughed Mrs. Billy, but with a keen glance at her host. She saw a look of great pain come into his eyes, and she noticed that his lips trembled.

"Well, now," she added, endeavoring, by being studiously bright, to divert his unpleasant thoughts, "what are your movements for the day?"

"Well, I——"

"I know to a comma. Some of your pippin-faced tenants have appointments with you. You have to see Farmer Tomlinson about taking down his barbed wire before cubbing commences, and Farmer Wilkins about those odious slates on the roof of his

new barn. Tiles must be used instead."

Hay pushed away his untasted breakfast. "Yes, I'm afraid I have rather a busy——"

"Don't apologize," said Mrs. Billy. "For my part, I have only one wish—to sleep in the sun. In a minute, I shall get you to tuck me up into that beautiful long-armed, long-legged chair, surround me with cushions, and leave me in peace."

"If you really wish it, Mrs. Billy, I shall be only too glad. Viola, I fancy——"

"Oh, I wouldn't disturb Viola, for worlds! I find the sun the most delicious companion, believe me."

Hay began to dig holes in the salt with a silver apostle spoon, and Mrs. Billy knew, knowing men, that he was about to make a clean breast of the subject that was first in his thoughts.

"It's very kind of you to put it like that," he said, after a long pause; "very kind. Viola is your friend, and you came to see, and be with, her. Honestly, my dear Mrs. Billy, I have been—not worried, because, as everybody knows, I'm a most easy-going chap, quite *un*-jealous, and all that, don't you know, and, of course, I know and trust Vi so implicitly. But——"

"Well?" Mrs. Billy's sympathetic voice attracted confidence.

Hay dropped the spoon, and pushed the salt-cellar away. His eyes met Mrs. Billy's fair and square.

"But I've been wondering whether you've been thinking that it is rather queer form that we should be left to entertain each other so much."

Mrs. Billy's reply was perfectly truthful.

"Not the least little bit, dear man. I know Billy, you see."

A gleam of hope crossed Hay's face. "Quite so, quite so," he said, quickly.

"I like him to be amused," continued Mrs. Billy. "It saves me the trouble—and he wants constant amusement. Vi doesn't seem to mind, and I adore lazing in the sun. In my opinion, Vi is an admirable hostess; I

feel that she does unto others as she wishes others, under similar circumstances, to do unto her. She places entertaining among the fine arts. Billy is happy; I am happy. So, my dear friend, don't spoil it all by being glum yourself. Now, will you?"

Hay saw the argument from her point of view. But his point of view was not the same. As a host, he was delighted that his wife should entertain his old friend Hutton, but he saw no reason why his scheme of entertainment should demand the monopoly of his wife.

"Not I," he said. "I was thinking then about you. I was nervous—no, hardly nervous, but perhaps a little afraid, that you——"

"Well?"

"Well, that you might perhaps—er—misunderstand the position."

Mrs. Billy watched him draw the salt-cellar nearer, and begin digging holes again. Any one who knew her well could have told by the expression of her eyebrows that she had made up her mind to a course of action. There was no banter in her voice when she spoke.

"I don't really misunderstand," she said, "though I have tried to persuade you that I do. *You are jealous.*"

Hay, metaphorically, flung down his cards.

"I am," he said, earnestly; "horribly!"

"Well, I can assure you there is no need for you to be. This is a harmless flirtation."

"For ten days, all day long, hour after hour—harmless!"

"Certainly. I repeat, from a most ripe knowledge, quite harmless."

"You're utterly certain?"

"I'm utterly certain."

"I'm not. Prove that there is no necessity for uneasiness."

"I will soon do that," said Mrs. Billy. "About once a year a husband gets bored—not precisely with his wife, but with his surroundings."

"I don't," said Hay.

"I mean the husband, generally. About once a year the wife frets at the

touch of the hand on the curb—not her husband's hand, exactly, but the hand of her surroundings. She knows that she used to be very beautiful, very fascinating, very charming. That is, she knew it before she married, for most men thrust the fact upon her notice. But the husband has a way, however really affectionate and faithful he may be, of taking things for granted. He is perfectly aware of the fact that his wife is beautiful, charming and fascinating, but he doesn't see the use of telling her so. Why should he? But, you see, madame the wife likes to be told by the husband that she is beautiful, and she likes to be told often. It is as necessary to her, more necessary to her, than daily bread. That is the little irritant, and it is at this moment that another man comes on the scene, who admires her and tells her so. Mark that, my friend. He tells her so, and consequently he appears, at first, to possess every virtue the husband lacks."

Hay listened with the utmost attention.

"And when," he said, "the wife does become a little restive, and some one turns up, to thrust the fact of her beauty upon her, what course does the husband pursue?"

"The wise husband," replied Mrs. Billy, "allows the little flirtation."

"Allows it!" cried Hay.

"Certainly. It bores the wife to death in about a month. All the time she is finding out how unlike the husband this other man is, and it is always to the other man's disadvantage. When the incident is over, the husband, if he is wise, sets back his calendar to the honeymoon, and God's in His heaven, all's right with the world."

Hay rose from his chair with a gay laugh. He raised his arms, and seemed to fling off a heavy pack that had been fastened to his shoulders. His whole face was alight.

"Mrs. Billy," he said, "you're a splendid little woman. How do you know these things?"

Peg laughed. "Observation, dear man, and—and experience."

"Well, but I've had heaps of experience. Do you mean to say that I've no observation?"

"My dear Archie," she replied, with a charming touch of sententiousness, "no amount of observation or experience ever enables a man to understand a woman."

"Why not?"

"Because a man looks at a woman through the strongest magnifying-glass that's invented, and that confines him to the surface; whereas a woman uses the X-rays of intuition, and sees right through. Don't worry any more, Archie; there's not the slightest need."

Hay strode over to his friend's wife and gave her his hand.

"You have made me feel a different man," he said, gratefully. "I am eternally grateful. I'm a jealous brute, but, you see——"

"You're very much in love with your wife, I know, and that is where, if you would only realize it, your safety lies."

"How?"

"No woman in this world will give up a certainty, a solid possession, for something which might turn to nothing as she grasped it. I am sure that Viola would find out before she grasped. See?"

She shook his hand again, and went over to the window.

"I see," said Hay. "Thanks so much."

Mrs. Billy stood in exactly the same spot, in exactly the same attitude as Viola had done, half an hour before, and Hay stood watching her as Hutton had watched Mrs. Hay, but not in the same way. There was admiration in his eyes, certainly, but there was also a great respect. The former had been in Hutton's eyes, but not the latter. It makes all the difference.

"Now, for any sake," cried Mrs. Billy, with mock impatience, "put me into that chair. I've talked so much, and eaten so much, that I *must* sleep in the sun."

Hay drew the long chair out of the room into the veranda and on to the edge of the lawn.

"How will that do?" he asked.

"Splendidly. Now for cushions."

"How many?"

"Hundreds," she said.

He collected as many as he could carry, and took them out. "Here are thousands."

Mrs. Billy sank into the chair with a sigh of content.

"Good," she murmured; "this is perfect."

"It will be when you have a sunshade," said Hay.

"Sunshade!" cried Mrs. Billy. "Go away, you Goth. I want the sun."

"You'll be pickled!" warned Hay.

"No," corrected Mrs. Billy; "preserved."

Hay chuckled, and, pretending that he thought she was already asleep, crept elaborately away on tiptoe.

#### IV

"THE wise husband," Mrs. Billy said, if you remember, "allows the little flirtation," and in that short, philosophical sentence touched upon the turning point in the domestic happiness of nearly every married couple.

It is not necessary to be married to know that marriage and racing are the two most uncertain institutions in the world, because in the former, as in the latter, people back their fancies without having any certain information. Neither need one have any doubt as to which is the more expensive hobby. There must be any number of millions of married people in this country. The happy ones could, I suppose, be counted upon the fingers of two hands; for it is not easy to be happy though married. It is a problem Adam and Eve set, and it has not often been solved.

The reasons are many and obvious. People meet under romantic circumstances, and, mistaking their merely artistic feelings for love, marry. They know nothing of each other's character or temperament. They have had no time to study hereditary tendencies. In most cases, even banking accounts are not entered into. More foolish



still, the man lifts the woman from mother earth, and places her on the summit of a stucco pedestal. Disillusionment follows as the night the day; and upon its heels come the daily jangle, the nightly tirade. Every jangle, every tirade, shakes the cement of the pedestal. To these marriages there are only three ends: judicial separation, divorce, or a life of angry looks, constant sarcasm, unpleasant innuendo, utter and complete unhappiness—the ruin of two lives.

Mrs. Billy Hutton's marriage was one of those which could be counted upon the fingers of two hands. She lived with Billy a life of complete content. She had not entered into a life-partnership with him without being thoroughly aware of all his bad, as well as all his good, qualities. She knew that he was weak, easily led, extravagant, self-indulgent, and inclined to sulk if he did not get his own way. But she knew that he was extremely kind-hearted, very generous, and, above all, very devoted to, and a little frightened of, herself.

On his side, he, too, had studied, before marriage, the character of the woman who had agreed to be his wife. At the first blush, her beauty and charming personality, her equability, her delicious laugh, her accomplishments, blinded him to everything else. But he soon discovered that he was the more in love of the two; that it would be necessary for him, for all her good nature, to treat her wishes with deference; that, in short, she demanded quite quietly, but quite firmly, his respect as well as his admiration. Without any discussion or argument, a mutual compact was agreed to that there should be an equal amount of give-and-take on both sides. Each trusted the other implicitly, and so at once, from the outset, jealousy, the rock on which the matrimonial canoe so often splits, found no place. "The wise husband allows the little flirtation," Mrs. Billy had said; and she had always mentally added, "the wise wife, also."

During the five years of their married life, Billy had carried on several

flirtations with pretty women. During the course of these temporary aberrations, Mrs. Billy had remained passive, secure in the knowledge of her own power and in her husband's loyalty. It so happened that she herself had been too busy, first with furnishing her house, and subsequently in entertaining, or being entertained, to go in for extraneous flirtation. The right sort of woman flirts only when time hangs heavily on her hands. With Mrs. Billy time never hung heavy. Her days were never long enough.

Wherefore, when Billy took an instant fancy for Viola Hay, and, from the first day of their visit, paid her constant attention, Peg's feelings were merely those of quiet amusement. During the season just at an end, she had found no time to keep up with the latest books. On a visit to the Hays, in their delightful bungalow on the banks of the Thames, all she wanted to do was to read, sit in the sun, write her letters, and recuperate.

But in regard to the Hays, what of them? They also had been married five years. They also were sensible people, who had not rushed blindfold into such a serious undertaking as marriage.

It is true that Archibald Hay was, and always had been, desperately in love with his wife. But he was one of those men who, having been many years in the army, have been taught to repress their feelings. He looked upon the expression of his deep sentiments as bad form. His manner to Viola was always consistently deferential and courteous, but he rarely let himself go, and never before a third person. In many ways he resembled Mrs. Billy. He had the same equable temperament, the same capability of being busy with very little to do, the same hatred of killing time. But, unfortunately for himself, and for the lasting success of his marriage, he was a jealous man.

In many ways, also, Viola Hay resembled Hutton. She, too, was self-indulgent, weak, easily led, extrava-

gant, and inclined to sulk. She married Archie Hay because she loved him. She never for a moment stopped to give a thought to his temperament, and she never had been quite able to understand his notions as to repression of feeling.

It cannot be said that her five married years had ever contained a genuinely unhappy hour. Equally, it cannot be said that they had ever contained a genuinely and completely happy one.

Shortly before the Huttons' arrival at the bungalow, she had been left a good deal to herself. Hay had been called away to their place in Scotland to see to the building of a new wing. During the inert days spent alone, she had ruminated over her husband's matter-of-fact manner of regarding her, and had encouraged a slight, almost imperceptible soreness into an open wound. When Billy came, she gladly played her part in the flirtation he seemed so anxious to begin, and, smarting under the impression that her husband cared less for her than he did at the time of their marriage, threw aside her good sense, and allowed herself to be in Billy's company from morning till night, day after day.

It is obvious that very little was needed to render the partnership between the Hays a deplorably unhappy one.

## V

VERY shortly after Mrs. Billy had been made entirely comfortable in the sun, two servants took possession of the breakfast-room. They saw the chair on the edge of the lawn, but no sunshade and no head; and so, with the inaccuracy of their class, came to the conclusion that the chair was empty. Therefore, they didn't think it necessary to lower their voices.

"Please, Jane, be quick," said Barming, appealingly. "It's my evenin' out, an' these double breakfasts is worse than invalids."

"Yes," replied Stanner, packing up the plates, "they do delay somethin'

awful. I couldn't fancy a flirtation with kidneys about. I prefer moonlight."

"Oh, I don't know about that. One of the nicest days I ever 'ad was August bank 'oliday a twelvemonth. Me an' Jim went to Brighton by excursion. That train was crowded, an' no mistake. An' Jim, when the tunnels come"—she giggled—"well, he *did* flirt!"

Stanner buttered a piece of toast on both sides, and balanced a large piece of strawberry jam in the middle of it with the absorbed air of a connoisseur. "Yes, that's very nice; but Jim, he's not what I call a real flirt."

"Jim's not!" cried Barming. "Give 'im a trial in a tunnel with no lights in the carriage!"

Stanner poured herself out a cup of coffee, and put into it three lumps of sugar.

"Yes, but tunnels ain't classy. Now, does Jim take your 'and at breakfast, look daggers of love, an' say, 'You're too 'eavenly for anything! I shall crush the life out of you in a minute!'"

Barming gave a scornful laugh. "No," she answered, "nor any one else, for that matter."

"I 'eard it just now spoken in 'ere."

Barming almost dropped a cup. Her face lighted up with curiosity and eagerness.

"The missus and Mr.——?"

"That's it," said Stanner, with the air of one who holds a hand of court cards. "I was comin' in while they was eatin'. I was off like a bird. I've 'ad no experience in missus's flirtations, but I don't suppose she likes people to come in sudden. I 'adn't noticed anything before, but if that's the kind of thing 'e says to 'er, it seems to be a bit off the normal."

"It's in the 'eat, I suppose," said Barming, in a quiet, awed voice.

"An'," went on Stanner, delighted with the impression she was creating, "Mr. 'Utton's no kid in these affairs. 'E can find 'is way about, I know. You can see 'is lady's used to 'is little games, too. They don't

disturb 'er, Rose, any more than watchin' 'im eat poached eggs."

"You mean to say Mrs. 'Utton don't mind?"

"Mind! Not she! She puts me in mind of 'Nelly Bly caught a fly, tied it to a string, let it go a little way, an' then—she pulled it in.'"

Barming became thoughtful. "That's all very well, but some string breaks."

"Or slips off. You're right, Rose. An' between you an' me an' this table-cloth, this is the time that Nelly Bly's fly slips. Of course, Mrs. 'Utton mayn't 'ave 'ad it so bad before as to make 'er nervous, but then she's never 'ad such a lovely woman as missus against her. Besides, missus knows the ropes. She's been to India."

"More 'eat," murmured Barming. "And do you think she cares about 'im, Jane?"

"Yes, Rose, I do. An' no wonder. 'E's just my sort—dark, with a curled mustache, a cleft in 'is chin, and, oh, my! what eyes!"

The grandfather clock in the hall struck ten.

Stanner, with a quick, characteristic movement, caught up her tray and hurried to the door, speaking as she went.

"Now, Rose, what are you doin', gossipin' like this? A nice row you'd get into if missus 'adn't gone to Lover's Backwater. Come away now, do!"

Barming put the table-cloth under her arm, and picked up the other tray.

"That's it, say it's me," she said, and followed Stanner out.

The door closed with a bang.

Quite quietly, Mrs. Billy rose from her chair, and, with a peculiar little smile in her eyes, came into the room.

The onlooker always sees more of the game than the batsman or the bowler.

## VI

"LET it go a little way," quoted Mrs. Billy, aloud, "'and then she pulls

it in.' . . . Ye-es! and then she pulls it in!"

Quick footsteps came nearer and nearer. Archie Hay came into the room hurriedly. He looked as white as a ghost. Without a glance at Mrs. Billy, he made his way to a chair, and, sitting down heavily, covered his face with his hands.

Peg's heart went quickly. A kind of prophetic feeling of approaching evil seized her. She shook it off as her eyes caught the exquisitely placid landscape without. How was it possible for anything evil to exist in such a beautiful world?

She caught the busy humming of bees, the throbbing note of the lark pouring out his soul to the sun; her eye took in the flaming colors round the lawn, the many greens of the unmoving trees, heavy-laden with leaves, the cool shadows thrown upon the water. Everywhere without the hand of peace rested tenderly.

Then her eyes turned into the room. There sat a man, with his face buried in his hands, a usually undemonstrative man, endeavoring, it seemed to her, to shut out a sight he would have given everything he possessed in the world never to have seen.

"Archie," she whispered, "what is it?"

Hay made a slight movement, but answered not a word.

She crossed to his side, and laid her hand on his shoulder. "Dear old Archie, what has happened?"

"Give me a minute, Mrs. Billy," said Hay, hoarsely. "I've got to tell you, but I haven't the strength or the pluck yet. Wait—a minute."

"Very well, dear friend," she replied, quietly.

There followed a pause. To Peg, whose every nerve was tense, through whose brain a hundred wild surmises chased one another, the minutes seemed like hours. She sat on the window-seat, with her hands spread out on the vermilion cushions, and waited.

Her neat figure in its white frock was thrown up against the dark oak of the window-frames. A glint of sun fell



upon her head, and set her hair on fire. She looked very young and slight.

Suddenly, Hay got up, with a forced laugh.

"Well, Mrs. Billy," he said, "I'm afraid this time my magnifying-glass saw further than your X-rays. This is, I suppose, the exception that proves the rule. I—I don't know how to tell you."

Mrs. Billy had herself well under control. "Don't try," she said, quietly. "I can guess. They've carried their flirtation just a little over the border, eh?"

Hay groaned. "A *little* over the border! My God! I saw them——"

He broke off, and flung out his hand. "I spoke to them. I told them to come here. I told them we'd better discuss the matter coolly—coolly! So they're coming. They are on their way. They'll be here in five minutes, and I shall lose her—lose her!"

His voice broke. Then he pulled himself together, angrily, and faced the wife of the man he wished from his soul he had never met.

"Forgive my selfishness. You will suffer equally with me. Believe me, I am sick for you—sick! If I can do anything—if I can help you in any way—for both our sakes . . ."

Mrs. Billy sprang up from the window-seat, and caught Archie's hands excitedly.

"For both our sakes pull yourself together now. We have come to the crossroads in our lives. Now there's a certain way out of most situations of this kind, and there's a certain way out of this."

"I see no way," said Hay. "I see only the divorce-court looming on the horizon."

"That's true. I don't minimize the danger. But I've got a theory that a sense of humor, firmly applied, can turn every serious drama into a light comedy."

Hay drew himself up, and looked very hurt.

"I am afraid," he said, gravely, "that I regard this matter as a serious one."

Mrs. Billy put out her hand, appealingly.

"And I, too. But will you trust me, Archie? Will you, for once, follow a woman's lead? Will you believe in a woman's instinct? Will you, Archie, will you?"

"Mrs. Billy," replied Hay, "I'll do anything on God's earth you tell me, but—they were in each other's arms!"

Mrs. Billy's lips tightened, but she smiled cheerily.

"Forget that," she said. "Let us try, both of us, to forget that. It's the most evanescent phase. We'll make them sorry, in the next forty-eight hours, that they ever met, if you'll only obey me now."

Hay caught something of her confidence. "I will!" he exclaimed; "I will, I swear!"

"Good!" cried Mrs. Billy. "Can you act?"

"I've played small parts as an amateur."

"I cast you now for the leading part in this play, and I want you to act with all the spirit and resource that you possess."

"I confess," began Archie, nervously, "that I hardly see——"

"Quick! Listen to me! When they come in, take up an uncompromising position by the fireplace, with the most determined expression on your face. I will sit on the settee, with my face hidden from their view, my whole attitude denoting grief. Then proceed to dress them down in the most scathing words at your command. Begin by pointing out that they have done their best to ruin our lives, and end by stating that you have no belief in divorce, and so don't feel justified in giving Viola her freedom. Then turn to me, and, with all the passion you can muster, confess that you have grown to love me, and ask me if I will trust my ruined life to you. I will rise, and look at you with a wondering gratitude in my eyes—oh, I'm a little Bernhardt in my way, believe me!—place my hand in yours, and we will drift out after the manner of Sydney Carton and Mimi."

"But," said Hay, "if they love each other?"

Mrs. Billy's voice became very serious.

"Archie," she said, "I'm not fooling you; I know that Vi doesn't love Billy, and that Billy doesn't love her. They'll say they do, but they would neither of them break up their homes for untold gold. We, you see, use up our superabundance of electricity in hundreds of energetic ways. They don't, and the sun simply fires it. That's the whole thing. It all means nothing, and if we apply the non-conductor, humor, sharply and decisively upon their respective heads, you will soon discover how very little their hearts are concerned. Will you try this plan?"

Hay took Mrs. Billy's hand, and kissed it.

"Try? Of course, I will try. I can't be grateful enough to you for all your courage and readiness. It makes me realize what an egregious ass I should have made of myself if I had not had your common-sense view shown me just at this moment. Yes, I will try, if only to show my gratitude to you, you brave little woman, and—and I pray God your plan will work."

"Ssssh!" whispered Peg; "here they come. Act, act, for all you're worth!"

## VII

THE rustle of a gown on the grass drifted into the room. Slow, heavy steps followed. Viola gave a curious, cold little laugh, and walked with her peculiar, swan-like movement, into the room. She shot a quick glance at her husband, who stood, bolt upright, in front of the fire, and at Peg, who sat on the settee, in her studied attitude. She then deliberately arranged the cushion in a big easy-chair, and sat down, drumming her fingers on the arms of it.

Billy followed her. He looked nervous and ill at ease and sulky. He flung his panama hat into a corner and, without looking at his wife,

stood by a cabinet in one of the angles of the room, and commenced to fidget with a china god with movable arms and head.

There was a long, uncomfortable pause.

Unable to bear the silence, Hutton turned his head toward Hay. "Well?" he said, with a burst. "What the devil do you mean to do about it?"

Hay looked up slowly, and spoke with studied contempt and sarcasm.

"I'm really sorry, Hutton, to have to keep you waiting. The situation, I find, is a little difficult to comprehend."

Hutton endeavored to hide his discomfort by bluster.

"There's not much comprehension needed, it seems to me," he said. "I love your wife, and your wife loves me. There's the thing in a nutshell."

Hay's hands closed tightly, and a gleam of jealous anger came into his eyes.

"No doubt," he replied, controlling his voice with an effort, "that part seems to you easy of comprehension. I admit the narrowness of my point of view. But it's the final issue that requires thought, I find."

"We'll go to France, if you like, or Timbuctoo. I don't mind. If you want to pot at me, you can."

Viola threw back her head, and laughed scornfully. "Really, are we in the Middle Ages? Are such things allowed? In any case, need we be so—extreme?"

Hay cleared his throat, and altered his attitude. Watching him from the corners of her eyes, Mrs. Billy came to the conclusion that the stage had lost a remarkable actor.

"My dear Viola, my excellent friend Hutton, and my dear Mrs. Billy," he said, looking, as he spoke, from one to the other, "beyond all else I wish, if possible, to avoid anything in the nature of an unpleasant scene. I am particularly anxious not to keep you in a hottish room longer than necessary, but I must ask you to give me a few moments of your time. Mrs. Billy, you know why we are here."

"You told her?" cried Hutton, in a tone of righteous indignation.

"I told her," replied Hay, quietly.

"Good Lord!"

"Yes, I told her. We will waive the fact, Hutton, that you and I have been close friends for years. We will waive the fact that my wife has been Mrs. Billy's closest friend for a still longer period. We will agree that all's fair in"—he gave a little smiling bow—"love. Therefore, what is the point at issue? You tell me you and my wife love each other. I presume for ever and ever—passionately—till death parts you."

The sarcasm stung Billy into an angry retort. "You presume damn well right," he said.

Hay bowed again, with another easy smile. Mrs. Billy felt almost compelled to cry, "Bravo!" especially when she saw that his hands were trembling.

"So," he continued, "there is, at any rate, no need for us—Mrs. Billy and me—to consider either of you because you have looked after yourselves so well. Consideration must be given solely to Mrs. Billy and to myself."

With a little, bored sigh, Mrs. Hay stretched herself lazily. "Isn't this rather long-winded?" she asked.

"I will be quite brief," said her husband. "I merely want to ask you what we are to do—Mrs. Billy and I. Has either of you thought of us? Naturally, you have been too occupied in thinking of each other! I may say at once that we have no intention of ending this matter in the usual way. There is something so banal about the seventh day in the divorce-court—still proceeding. We have no ambition to emulate the shining lights of smart society. It is extremely expensive, and quite unnecessary, as we do not wish to advertise. Besides, it would effectually extinguish our lights. There is another way. We will follow your example."

He paused. Hutton looked up quickly, with a deep flush. Mrs. Hay's eyebrows lost their affected indifference, and a look of something like fright came into her eyes.

"We will follow your example," repeated Hay. "There shall be no scandal, no publicity, no divorce-court, but with you two under the same roof to satisfy the requirements of convention, Mrs. Billy and I will lead our lives together." With a movement of tender solicitude, which was worthy of Charles Wyndham, he turned toward Peg. "Mrs. Billy—Peg—there is no longer any need for me to keep silence. For many days I have seen you constantly. What can that mean to any man who can appreciate all your splendid gifts to their full value? Only one thing."

He paused again, and caught a look of admiration and amusement from Mrs. Billy.

Viola's expression had undergone a complete change. Her fingers drummed no more on the arms of the chair. She sat bolt upright, staring at her husband, startled, unable to believe that what she heard was not being spoken in a dream.

As for Billy Hutton, he stood with his mouth open, with all the color gone from his face. He looked like a man badly knocked out after a bout with the gloves.

Hay went nearer to Mrs. Billy, and bent slightly over her chair.

"I have been loyal to my wife, as you have been loyal to your husband. They have proved dead-sea fruit." He then put into his voice a touch of passion. "But you are the true, the intoxicating vine. Let us eschew all thoughts of unholy matrimony, and cling together through our lives in free and perfect bliss. Peg, will you place your sweet hand in mine, and trust in me?"

Viola rose from her chair, involuntarily, as though drawn up from it. Hutton held his breath, and fixed his eyes with a look of appeal upon his wife. She, Peg, gave her hands to Hay, and stood by his side. There was something very simple and touching in the action.

"Whither thou goest," she said, in a low, sweet voice, "I will go. Thy people shall be my people, and your life my life."

With his eyes fixed on hers, out of which she managed, with a great effort, to keep a look of intense amusement and sense of fun, Hay led her slowly out of the room and across the lawn to the river.

In blank amazement and inexpressible horror, Viola watched them go.

Hutton, in a kind of frenzy of rage, dashed the china god off the cabinet, and then kicked the jagged pieces into a corner of the room.

In the distance, a pea-hen gave a sad cry.

### VIII

THAT evening, Viola and Billy Hutton had tea and dinner alone together. They waited for the others to come until both meals were cold.

Viola handed Hutton a cup of tea in silence. He stirred it angrily, looked into it for several minutes, and put it down, untasted.

Many times between tea and dinner he went into the bungalow and called, "Peg! Peg!" Many times he stumped across the lawn to the boat-house, and scanned the river to the right and left.

The sun sank slowly, reluctantly, behind a mass of crimson clouds. The birds chattered about the doings of the day, and went to sleep. Myriads of gnats, in battalions, chased one another in their aimless, energetic way, and retired for the night, no one knew where. Bees, honey-laden and tired, went home, and wasps gave up their search for jam and fruit till the next day. Shadows lengthened as the sun retired, and the moon rose upon a quiet, placid world.

For the third time Stanner sounded the dinner-gong.

With a sense of injury too deep to put into mere words, Billy again visited the boat-house, and Viola peered into the shadow and listened eagerly for the plash of oars.

Neither noticed the exquisite effects of the trees cut sharply against the cloudless sky. Neither noticed the thin line of silver which touched everything like a layer of snow. Neither

enjoyed the scent of jasmine and honeysuckle which hung upon the quiet air. Both were filled with horror and self-pity. Both were thinking bitterly of the unaccountable immorality so suddenly developed by their respective better-halves.

While they pretended to eat dinner in silence at opposite ends of the table, Peg, in the best of spirits, and Archie Hay, dismal and cheerless, rested themselves at a meal in an arbor in the garden of a hotel two miles down the river.

Rising unsatisfied in every sense of the word, Billy left the room without a remark to Mrs. Hay, and proceeded to pack his clothes. Then he sent Stanner to Mrs. Hay to ask whether the dog-cart might be made use of, and, having obtained permission, bundled his kit-bag into it, jumped in beside the groom, and drove furiously into the night.

His destination proved to be the station at Maidenhead. Arrived there, he tipped the puzzled groom, told him he was going to London on particular business, watched the dog-cart disappear on its return journey, and took a cab, with his kit-bag, to the Bull Inn. Here he sulkily engaged a room, had his bag sent to it, and took up an unapproachable position in the corner of its comfortable private bar, and steadily read a two-weeks'-old sporting paper upside down till midnight, when he went angrily to bed.

He would tell you, if you asked him, that he heard the church clock strike every hour of the early morning. And he would be most indignant if you were to smile incredulously.

Viola, who had by ten o'clock worked herself into the most furious temper, went up to her room and locked the door. Her maid came and tapped timidly, and was ordered away. Her windows were open, and at every sound she started to her feet and listened eagerly. The minutes between ten o'clock and half-past ten seemed to her the longest she had passed in her life.

Suddenly, she heard the swirl of a

dress and steps coming from the river. Trembling, and on the verge of tears, she ran swiftly to the door, unlocked it and stood listening.

If Archie had entered at that moment she would have gone on her knees to him and begged forgiveness.

But no Archie came.

Mrs. Billy made her way quickly upstairs, humming a little air, stopped at Mrs. Hay's door for a moment and called out, brightly, "Good night, Vi!" and passed on to her room.

For an hour Viola stood listening and waiting. Then, at last, unable to bear the suspense, she went down to the hall. It was in darkness except for the light of the moon. She passed from the breakfast-room to the dining-room, from the dining-room to Archie's smoking-room. Each place was empty.

"Archie! Archie!" she whispered.

No answer came. An owl hooted, and far away in the distance a dog barked. The silence frightened her.

She turned and went back quickly to her room. The air chilled her. She crossed to shut the window, and, with a hot pain in her heart, saw that the bachelor's room in the boat-house was lighted up. Archie was there.

With a little sob, she flung herself face downward on the bed, and cried like a child.

## IX

Four exquisitely fine days passed. On the Friday morning, after Hay and Mrs. Billy had breakfast alone, Stanner and Barming proceeded to turn out the room—a domestic revel which, though quite necessary, is always calculated to undermine the temper of the man of the household.

All the furniture in the many-cornered, oak-wainscoted breakfast-room was covered with cloths; all the chairs were piled upon the table. Barming, with a duster tied over her head, was on her knees, polishing the parquet floor. Stanner, out on the veranda, was shaking mats vigorously. The little clouds of dust shot forth at each shake.

She suddenly stopped her operations, and, looking round the corner of the door, gave a soft, excited whistle.

Barming started nervously, and paused in her work.

"Oh, Jane, don't!" she said, fretfully. "Whistle before five of a Friday, and you'll be sure to cry before ten of a Saturday."

Stanner dropped the mats, and ran into the room.

"Rose," she whispered, "she's at it again."

"Who's at what?" asked Barming.

"Why, the missus. Creepin' about like a panther after the master an' Mrs. 'Utton."

"Oh, Lor'!" said Barming, looking uneasily over her shoulder.

"Do you know," Stanner continued, "that this is the fourth day of this hide-an'-seek business?"

"The fourth! Well, there's no animal can fly so fast as the time, they say!"

Stanner returned to the window, collected the mats, and went on her knees beside Barming.

"Get on, Rose; we're all be'ind time with this blessed room. We can talk as we work."

"I can't 'urry more than I am 'urrying," said Barming, with a kind of whine; "I never could. The upset of this 'ouse'old 'as communicated itself to me. I'm all of a tremble for fear of what's comin' next."

"I like anything like that," said Stanner. "If I'd been a man, I should 'ave been a detective. I'm going to get right to the bottom of this; I wish I could get some slip into this floor."

"Seems to me there's too much slip in this 'ouse. Look at Mr. 'Utton, 'e's slipped, an' no mistake! Not a sign of 'im since Monday."

Stanner chuckled. "And if I know anything about symptoms, the major and Mrs. 'Utton are on the slip, too."

"Yes," said Barming, with a kind of triumph, "and all along you kept on saying it was the missus and Mr. 'Utton."

"Ah, but we've set to partners since



Monday. Mr. 'Utton's gone, the missus is left, and the master's carrying on with missus's man's wife."

"Oh, Jane," said Barming, with an involuntary laugh, "you do run on!"

"Run on! I should 'ave to be a prize sprinter to keep pace with this lot! They're flying-machines!"

Barming got up and began rearranging the chairs. "I'd give a lot to know 'ow we really stand."

"Well, look the facts in the face. Mr. 'Utton's turned as gloomy as a coal-'ole, and 'as gone off on 'is own. Where? Can't say. Why? Dunno. The missus is colder, freezinger than ever I've seen 'er."

"An' yet she pays more attention to the master than ever she done before the 'Uttons come!" exclaimed Barming.

"Artfulness!" said Stanner, knowingly. "She wants something. And Mrs. 'Utton? She's more like a young bee than ever—always on the buzz. An' a limpet couldn't cling tighter to master than she does. 'Will she go there?' says the mistress. 'If Archie likes,' says she, blushin' like a bride."

"Oh, come, Jane, when did you ever see 'er blushin'?"

"I didn't need to see it, stupid; I 'eard it in 'er voice."

Barming got up and commenced removing the covering from the furniture.

"Well, any'ow," she said, with a touch of pleasure, "missus is fairly out in the cold."

"Ah, but she won't remain there long," said Stanner, prophetically. "Take it from me. She isn't the one to sit by while another woman flirts with 'er 'usband, same as Mrs. 'Utton did. Not she! The icier she gets, the 'otter the fermentation inside. . . . 'Ave you done?"

"Yes," said Barming, "I've done."

"Come along, then; we'll get on to the drawing-room. Thank goodness there's a good view of the garden from there. We shall be able to see something of the new lovers, p'r'aps. Bring your cloths."

"Makes work a pleasure, don't it?"

said Barming, as she followed Stanner into the hall.

## X

A RIPPLE of merry laughter drifted into the room.

Mrs. Billy, in an ingenuously simple hat, peeped in, and then beckoned over her shoulder.

"Vi's all right, Archie; she isn't here."

Hay slowly joined her, and followed her into the room. He looked as though he had not slept for several nights. There were lines under his eyes, and he was not so scrupulously well-groomed as usual.

"I'm hot," he said, "and tired, and very miserable."

"Of course you are," replied Mrs. Billy, brightly. "So am I." And then she laughed merrily, and made herself quite comfortable in a deep arm-chair. "What a chase!" she added. "She seemed determined not to let us out of her sight this morning."

Hay lighted a cigarette, took one puff and flung it gloomily away. "I can't understand it," he said.

"Nor I—quite. But if only she would look a little fatigued herself, how it would help me. She never appears to hurry, and yet she won't catch us. It's a horrid sensation."

"Poor darling!" said Archie, with deep feeling, "and she so hates walking."

"But only think, my dear Archie, what large doctor's bills we are saving her! Do you know how I feel? Like a girl again, out of bounds, with a school-mistress after me."

Hay sat down, heavily. "And do you know how I feel?"

"No; how?"

"Like a criminal. The whole time you and I are playing our parts, I'm wishing we had never taken them up. I don't think I've ever been so out of temper in my life. What good is it doing? Why does Vi follow us about?"

Peg began to fan herself. "My dear man, for the best of reasons. She's jealous."

"Jealous!" cried Archie, eagerly. "Are you sure?"

Mrs. Billy grew sympathetic when she caught the hopeful look in Hay's eyes.

"Quite sure," she said. "And, like all jealous people, she's forced to rub salt well into the wound. Every time I take your arm, every time I smile deliciously at you—and I *can* smile deliciously when I try—every time I contrive to induce you to bend your head down to me—and it isn't often—in goes the salt. She hates watching us, but she is obliged to do so to convince herself that what she believes about us is really true."

"What does she believe?"

"She believes all you said to me on Monday. She believes that you and I, as counsel for the prosecution always puts it, are more to each other than we should be. Oh, isn't it too funny!" Mrs. Billy's silvery laugh echoed among the beams.

"No," replied Hay, "it isn't funny. I find the whole affair ghastly—ghastly! How in the world shall I ever persuade her that you and I have really been playing parts? It's all very well for you to laugh. You understand these things—I don't. I confess I have no gift for psychology. I'm clean out of it. Personally, I can't see how it is possible for her to be so easily deceived. I suppose you do?"

"Of course! I'm not a blind bat of a man, thank goodness." Mrs. Billy grew suddenly grave, and, leaning forward, put a kind hand on Hay's arm. "The truth of it is, dear Archie, that she loves you."

"She's a precious peculiar way of showing it," replied Archie, bitterly.

"Oh, lots of us are like that! The point of the whole thing is as clear as daylight. Vi has been too certain of you. She has believed that nothing she could do or say could ever make you leave off caring for her."

"And she's right. I am more in love with her to-day than when we married."

Mrs. Billy looked roguishly at him.

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"That, my dear Archie," she said, "is brought home to me with almost stunning force every time I try to induce you to even pretend to make love to me. You constantly jeopardize my lovely plan! But, you see, Viola has known it, too—up to this walk, and that has been one of your mistakes. Still, with your continued assistance, I am working this out fairly well. I honestly believe that I shall be the cause of your lifelong happiness before many days have passed."

Hay looked wistfully at her. "Do you, Mrs. Billy? I shall be your grateful admirer to the end of time."

"Bless you, I also mean to be happy. Some day, when our domestic hearths glisten peacefully again, I shall settle down with a packet of quills and a pound of foolscap, and write a handbook for the use of married people on, 'How Much Rope to Allow One's Better-Half.'"

Hay paced the room for three or four moments in silence. "I must be a poor sort of husband," he said, at last, "to drive my wife to flirt with another man."

"You see, my dear friend, you don't tell your wife of your adoration quite often enough."

Hay stopped, and stared at Peg in amazement. "But, my dear Mrs. Billy, I tell her frequently."

"Frequently," said Mrs. Hutton, oracularly, "is not often enough for a woman. She requires to be told all the time—vividly, picturesquely. The mistake you have made has been that you have maintained a too placidly contented appearance. You have taken things for granted—and you should never take things for granted with a woman. It fills her with a void—so she flirts. By flirting with Billy, Viola has been trying to stir that calm, soldier-man exterior of yours. Poor dear, I'm afraid she's having a very bad time, in consequence."

"I hope not."

"It's a splendid tonic for her. So it is for my old man."

Hay turned to her, quickly. "By

the way," he asked, "what on earth has Billy done with himself?"

Mrs. Billy broke into a little laugh. "What a funny old thing he is!"

"Don't you feel a little nervous about him? I don't want to frighten you, but suppose he . . . well, you know, Mrs. Billy, when a man's down on his luck, a river has an awful fascination."

Mrs. Billy's laugh became almost hilarious. "Oh, dear, how funny! Oh, Archie, my dear, how comic! Billy hurt himself? Billy? Oh, ho, ho!"

"Well, I'm glad you take it in that way," said Hay.

"Don't you really know Billy better than that?"

"I only know how I should feel under these circumstances. If you hadn't made me hope there was a chance in this plan of yours, I might have been tempted to go pretty near the river myself."

"Oh," said Mrs. Billy, with her head on one side, "but then, you see, you take everything very seriously, whereas my Billy does not. He is a thoroughly happy, most charming, and very lovable person, but he is also an ego-tist, and, oh, so careful never to hurt himself."

"Still, I wish I could think why he went away, and where he's gone."

"I can tell you. He went, because the first thing he hates is being uncomfortable; and the situation . . . well, it was that! Then, he naturally anticipated some awkward explanation with Viola, and he hates explanations. So he is trusting to me to lift him out of the muddy little pool he has jumped into, dry him and brush him down, wash his face and hands, and dress him up in a nice, clean collar and tie. He was shocked on Monday, miserable on Tuesday, irritable on Wednesday, fidgety on Thursday, and by this morning he has braced himself up to explain to Viola how mistaken they've been—unless, by some chance, he meets me first, and then he'll call upon me to explain for him."

A look of supreme astonishment

crept into Hay's face. "How on earth do you know all this?" he asked.

"Not by clairvoyance," said Mrs. Billy, "but through the medium of the post."

"So he's been writing to you, has he?"

"I've had a letter from him every morning."

"Where's he been, Mrs. Billy?"

"In bed, my friend."

"In bed? Good heavens!"

"He has spent the last four days in bed."

"By Jove!"

Mrs. Billy gave up one whole minute to laughter. Her very fingers seemed to issue her sense of amusement.

"Billy always goes to bed when he has made things uncomfortable for himself," she said. "And now, having proved by his absence from Viola at such a trying moment, how ephemeral were his feelings for her, and as his repeated commands for my presence at his bedside have for the first time been utterly ignored, he has announced his intention of coming to fetch me to-day."

"Fetch you!" cried Hay, with a very genuine touch of fright. "Will you go?"

"My dear Archie, I am going to leave him in his little muddy pool for quite a long time, so that in the future he may look upon muddy water as singularly unhealthy, and—avoid it."

A step sounded on the path. Hay started, and held up his finger. "Is that Viola?"

Mrs. Billy smiled sympathetically. "How well you know her step! I didn't hear a sound."

"I know the touch of her hand on the door; I know the sound of her breath; her step is like a voice to me."

"You'll be happy one day," said Mrs. Billy, gently; "I know you will."

Hay showed more emotion than ever Mrs. Billy had seen him do before. "Pray God you're right," he said. "I have been hideously to blame to let her get into such a state of mind as to feel the necessity for flirtation—to



need some one else to tell her how beautiful she is. You've taught me something, Mrs. Billy. You've made me realize that a man should never sink the worship of the lover in the common-sense, every-day love of the husband. The discipline that demands no sign of feeling is destruction to happiness. . . . If only I hadn't lost her! If only I'm in time!"

He turned to the window, and listened.

"Is she coming?" asked Mrs. Billy.

"Yes," he said.

"Then," cried Mrs. Billy, excitedly, "come here quickly, and sit on the arm of my chair."

Hay paused, irresolutely. "I'm not ungrateful, Mrs. Billy; you know that, but must we go on——?"

"Of course we must. Why, we've scarcely begun! Be plucky! You promised to see it through. Quickly!"

He did as he was told, grudgingly.

"Now," continued Mrs. Billy, rapidly, "put your arm over the back, and when Vi comes in, urge me wildly to kiss you. I shall tease you in the orthodox way, and refuse. When you feel that she is well in the room, remove my arm and plant a kiss on my cheek a good inch away from my ear."

She leaned back in the corner of her chair, as arranged.

Viola entered.

## XI

THERE is nothing so irritating to a jealous wife as to see the other woman refuse her husband's kisses. So peculiar is the jealous temperament, so unreasonable, that a wife suffers far less pain, if the other accepts the husband's kisses with avidity.

With most people, jealousy is not an overwhelming dislike to see the person they love bestow favors upon others, so much as the lurking fear that they wish to do so, and don't. It may be ill-bred, it may be bad form for a man to kiss, in the presence of his wife, a woman who is no relation, but the wife seldom minds. What she does

most strongly object to is the fact that he does *not* kiss the woman in her presence when she knows that he desires very keenly to do it, and she thinks that he will undoubtedly do so behind her back.

It comes to this: there is no jealousy where there is complete trust. Where, oh, my masters, can you put your hand on a man and a woman and say, "These two people trust each other"?

For some minutes, Viola stood watching her husband and her old friend with an expression of resentment, disgust and black jealousy.

The stage had lost an extremely clever leading lady in Peg. Her acting of the ingénue in love was superb. She laughed shyly, and dashed quick, inviting glances, and moved her head now to one side, now to another.

"No, Archie, no!" she said, in an affected tone of reproof. "You've surely kissed me enough for one day!"

"Just one more, Peg, please."

"No," she replied, putting her hands against his face, "not another one. Not half-a-quarter of one. You've worn a positive hole in my cheek already in these four days—a perfect pit."

"Why have such a lovely cheek, then? Don't be unkind. Just one more."

"Well, then," said Peg, giddily, "the eighth-of-a-sixteenth of one."

Very unwillingly, Hay bent down and kissed her cheek lightly.

Viola put some account books on her desk, and spoke in a cold, regular voice.

"I trust I shall not disturb you?"

Peg gave an affected little squeal.

"Oh, Archie, get up; it's Viola."

Hay made a willing effort to do so, but was held tight by Peg, who whispered, "Keep still, stupid! Say something sweet."

"Don't be such a prude, Peg; I shall stay where I am."

Peg giggled. "No, I'd really rather you didn't. We shall disturb Viola."

Hay made another movement, and found himself held fast.

Viola chose a pen in a deliberate

fashion. "I came to do my accounts," she said, "but I dare say they can wait."

Peg turned her head over her shoulder, with a sweet smile.

"Oh, *please* go on with them," she said. "We'll be as quiet as mice, won't we, darling?"

"You're a jolly little mouse," he replied, with a painful attempt at levity that nearly choked Mrs. Billy.

Viola sat down, and crossed her hands in her lap. "I will wait until you have finished with the room," she said.

Instantly, Peg jumped up. "Oh, then we'll go into the garden. We couldn't possibly keep you from your accounts. Keep it up," she added, under her breath, to Archie.

Hay hesitated. At the best, he was a good amateur actor. To continue to play so long and so trying a part was almost beyond him.

"The sun's not so hot," he said; "suppose we go out in the punt."

"I should love it. But your hair's all rough, sweetheart," she added, with a touch of admirable theatricality. "Bend down."

Hay felt, and looked, horribly uncomfortable. He glanced at his wife, and saw a hard glitter in her eyes, a tight compression of her lips. A great wave of love went out to her, and he longed to fling himself on his knees by her chair and take her in his arms. With an inward feeling of exultation, he became almost convinced that Viola, as Peg assured him, was jealous of him; and if she was jealous, how could she love Hutton?

Barely five seconds passed, while he was arguing to himself, and before he could reply to Peg she had mounted on a foot-stool, and commenced to smooth his hair with her hands.

"How rough some kinds of hair get!" she said, watching the effect on Viola with satisfaction. "That's better. It's beautiful hair—quite the kind I like best. I hope you'll never lose it. Do you think you will?" Then she whispered, "Keep it up—do. Everything's going splendidly."

"Barbers assure me not," said Hay, taking up his part again. "I shall go gray pretty soon, though."

Peg clapped her hands with an exact imitation of the stage ingénue.

"Oh," she cried, "but I shall adore you with gray hair! I shall bleach mine when yours gets white. Sha'n't we be a jolly old couple?" She put her hand lovingly to his lips. "Kiss it," she commanded, in an undertone.

Hay kissed it. "You—you darling," he said, feebly.

Viola rose to her feet, and stood facing them icily. Her effort to repress her anger added two years to her appearance.

"I was going to ask you if you would care to have the launch and supper at Skinner's to-night. The McIvors want to come, too. We could all come back by moonlight."

Peg looked at Hay, and then at Viola, and pretended to stutter like a girl newly engaged.

"Oh," she said, "it's very kind, and—and we should both have liked it very much, but—and it would have been very jolly—but we—to tell you the truth—we thought—but, of course, if Archie would prefer— Would you, Archie? . . . Say no," she whispered.

Hay looked resolutely out of the window. "I thought we had arranged to punt to the lock and watch the sun set," he said.

"So we had, and take supper with us. So I'm afraid we can't join you, Viola; thanks very much."

"You are going alone in the punt?" she asked, very distinctly.

"You and Billy spent nearly ten days alone in the punt, didn't you?"

Viola's face flamed. "Will you give me your orders as to your supper?" she said.

The moment she had made the remark, Peg deeply regretted it. It sounded so gratuitously cruel. She made two steps toward Viola to beg her pardon, which would have brought down the curtain on the play she and Hay were so strenuously playing for the good of Hutton and Viola.

Hay saw what she was about to do. He put his hand quickly on her arm, and spoke carelessly to his wife.

"It would be kind if you would order two suppers for us," he said. "Just one of your specially nice suppers. Come, Peg, we are wasting this exquisite morning. Shall I take a book for you?"

Mrs. Billy had regained possession of her histrionic abilities. "Just as though it would be the least use," she cried, archly. "You know you will not let me read a single word. . . . He's a delightful companion, isn't he, Viola? . . . Oh, I beg your pardon, but I'm afraid he'll break the arm of every chair in the house. Dear old Archie! is he impatient to get on the river with his sweetheart, then?"

She took his arm, and together they went on the veranda. Archie Hay looked over his shoulder at his wife, whose back was toward him, and kissed his hand. He was the most miserable man in England.

## XII

FOR a quarter of an hour by the clock, Viola Hay remained where she had been left. Her face was white and set, and there was an angry line between her eyebrows. She listened to the sound of Peg's rippling laugh so long as it remained in the air. She did not turn to watch the two across the sun-splashed lawn; her eyes were fixed on the floor.

There came suddenly a look of resolution into them, and she went swiftly to the bell, and rang impatiently.

Stanner found her seated at her desk, writing a telegram. She wrote more precisely, with a firmer, bolder touch than ever before.

"I am leaving home this evening," she said. "See that my things are packed for a long stay, please."

"Yes'm," said Stanner, with a little start.

"Order the carrier to fetch the trunks that will not go on the brougham."

"Yes'm."

"I suppose you can get the packing done in time for the nine-thirty?"

"Oh, yes'm!"

"Then tell Dibben to come round at nine."

"Yes'm."

"I shall dine alone in the boudoir."

"Yes'm."

"Tell cook to have a cold supper packed in the hamper—the supper Major Hay was so pleased with some weeks ago. Cook will remember. And tell her to be particularly careful in packing the aspics. Ask her to place the champagne on ice. It had better be at the boat-house at nine."

"Yes'm." Stanner's eyes gleamed with excitement.

"I will travel in my gray coat and hat."

"Yes'm."

"Have this telegram sent to the Coburg Hotel."

"Yes'm."

"That's all, thank you."

Stanner took the telegram, and left the room, with her eyebrows disappearing into her fringe.

Billy Hutton looked into the room, gloomily.

## XIII

WITH an exclamation of relief and delight, Viola ran to him and put her arm through his.

"Oh, Billy!" she cried, with a suspicion of tears in her voice, "how glad, how glad, I am to see you again!"

Billy looked around uneasily, and tried to release his arm.

"Take care, Viola; some one may be looking."

But Viola was too glad to have some one to speak to after her four lonely, painful days, to notice Billy's utterly changed manner.

"I can't tell you how much I've missed you—how lonely I've been here. What I've had to endure, what I've had to put up with, no one can realize. You, at any rate, love me, and I want your protection and your

help. Why did you go away? Where have you been?"

"In London," replied Billy, sulkily, "on business."

"What! all the time?" Viola spoke as if the four days had been a month.

"Yes," said Billy again; "full of work. I say, Vi, don't hold on to me like this, there's a good girl. Suppose the others saw? Where's Peg?"

"Why, with Archie, of course."

Billy disengaged his arm roughly, and crossed the room with a barely smothered oath.

Viola, still unable to realize the change in Billy's manner, followed.

"I've been so miserable without you," she said. "Have you been thinking of me all this time?"

Billy stared at her in surprise. Here was a different Viola! Here was a Viola with appeal in her voice and tears in her eyes. This was not the unruffled, assured woman of the world he had left so hurriedly.

"My dear child," he said, anxiously, "what's come over you? You're not usually so—so clinging!"

"I am so afraid my undemonstrative manner chilled you—drove you away. I am trying to alter, dear. I'm so thankful you've come back! We've so much to discuss, so much to arrange for the future."

Horribly uncomfortable, Hutton took up an uncompromising position on the bear's skin in front of the fireplace, and pulled his mustache.

"Look here, Viola," he said, "I think you ought not to talk to me like this. It won't do, you know. Forgive my being—er—quite frank, but we mustn't have a repetition of Monday, whatever happens. That kind of thing makes one feel a complete ass. Of course, as you, no doubt, quite well understand, the whole thing was mere fun on both our parts, utterly misunderstood by Hay and—and my wife . . . Oh, Lord, where is Peg?"

An extraordinary metamorphosis took place in Viola's expression. She stepped a couple of paces backward, and turned on the discomfited man a

pair of eyes blazing with anger and wounded pride.

"Your wife is carrying out her compact with my husband with remarkable effect," she said, with biting sarcasm. "They are far more fond and foolish than we ever were, and have none of your false modesty. So far, indeed, from fearing observation, they seek it. They make love to each other in front of other people like a nursemaid and a postman."

"What!" cried Billy.

"In fact, I have never seen a clearer case of infatuation. Your wife's behavior is almost indelicate."

Hutton looked about him, wildly.

"There's a mistake—there must be a mistake. Peg's never looked at another man! Besides, I wrote and told her I'd given you up."

"I beg your pardon?"

Hutton adopted a highly moral tone. "My dear child, it's best to look the matter straight in the face. It was wrong—the whole thing was wrong. Don't you see that yourself now?"

Mrs. Hay laughed, sarcastically. "Isn't it rather late to think of that?" she asked.

"It's never too late. You and I have come to our senses."

"And our respective better-halves have lost theirs." Viola's voice rose. "They spend the whole day in each other's arms. They call each other by every term of endearment. They are never apart from morning till night. As a blind for the servants, my husband sleeps in the bachelor-room of the boat-house."

For the moment, Hutton was too shocked to speak. "How appalling! how awful!" he said, at last.

Viola turned on him, sharply. "Is this sudden morality of yours due to the change of air?" she asked.

"Change of what?" asked Billy, too worried and upset to remember his story of work in London.

"They are merely living up to their compact," continued Viola. "What can it matter to you? You gave up everything for my sake, if you remember, 'for ever and ever.' If those are

not your own words, they were something to that effect. They are now giving us every chance."

"Chance! What do you mean?"

"I presume you intend to lead your life with me now?"

Hutton's amazement under any other circumstances would have been amusing. "What!" he gasped. "Stop living with Peg? Spoil my life with Peg? Ruin her happiness for the sake of that kind of thing?"

Viola's anger became scathing. "Did you intend to ruin *my* life, if you could have persuaded me, without any idea of sacrificing your own? Were you merely intent on having your own way without the least intention of paying for it?"

"Why drag in that? I've given up all idea of love-making, so far as you are concerned."

"Thank you very much. But I greatly fear that you will be forced by circumstances to take it up again."

"Never!" said Hutton, forcibly. "I must see Peg at once."

"You can't. She is on the river with my husband. No, it's no use your going away. You may as well stay here and face things. You have come to a wall this time, my friend, and there is no turning to the right or left. There's only one way. You must turn back—and find me, Billy."

She moved quickly to his side. He realized that she was now filled with only one idea—to revenge herself on Peg, at whatever cost to herself.

"I am ready to go with you wherever you wish. I am ready to be yours, as you so much wanted me to be four days ago. And you must take me—you *must*."

Billy was by no means too self-centered not to be able to see that Viola was saying things she didn't really mean; that she was carried away and overwrought by the turn events had taken.

He took her hand kindly. "My dear child," he said, soothingly, "I'm afraid you don't understand. This has been a great shock to me. I now realize fully what a huge mistake it was to

flirt with you. But I can't consent, although I am awfully sorry for you, to ruin Peg's whole life. It isn't possible. You are asking too much."

"You must leave Peg out of it! Through you I have lost my husband. Do you know what that means to me?"

"My case is the same," said Hutton, gently. "My wife loves me. She is only piqued because she thinks I no longer love her."

Viola went off into a shriek of angry, hysterical laughter. "Loves you—you? You mad egotist! Would any woman think twice of you with a man like Archie in the question? Archie has lost his head over Peg. Do you suppose she can resist him?"

"There's no question of resistance. I tell you she loves *me*!"

"And in regard to me? What is to become of me? You run away to avoid an uncomfortable situation; you stay away for four days, and then you return to make it up with your wife—is that it?"

Hutton lost his temper. "Yes," he said, "it is."

"You make a very big mistake. I leave here to-night, and so do you. These two shall be left to themselves."

Hutton became almost voiceless. "Leave my wife alone with your husband?" he stammered. "You must be mad to think I could do such a thing."

"You'll find there is method in my madness. Do you, for one instant, suppose that I am the kind of woman to be played with? Do you, for one instant, suppose that I am the kind of woman to let a man treat me as you have treated me, and then leave me?"

"No, no!" said Hutton. "Of course not. You'll do all you can to prevent him from spoiling Peg's life."

Viola stamped her foot. "On the contrary. You will assist me to ruin your wife's life. Am I to be thrown aside, to be trampled under foot by you, as well as by my husband, for the sake of this insignificant woman? Oh, you fair-weather friend! The first touch of discomfort, the first irritating breath of wind that blows upon you,



and you shrivel up! You return crying to your wife to shelter you! But she shall not! You have violated my trust in you, and I will punish you if I have to ruin myself. I am going to divorce my husband—and your wife shall be co-respondent.”

Hutton lost all self-control, and seized Viola by the wrists.

“You devil! Peg shall never be dragged through the courts at the instance of such a woman as you.”

“You think not?” cried Viola, freeing herself with a quick gesture, and going swiftly to the door. “How will you stop me?”

“I’ll—I’ll kill you first!”

With a peal of derisive laughter, Viola opened the door.

“Ho! you comfortable coward, you superlative egotist! You’ll kill me, will you? Try, try, try!”

#### XIV

ONE laughs a good deal at the language put into the mouths of characters in melodramas. One is immensely amused at what one sarcastically calls its unreality. One would be infinitely annoyed to be told that when under the stress of emotion brought about by money troubles, domestic upsets, wounded vanity and a hundred other reasons, one says pretty much the same things as these very melodrama characters written by some uneducated hack writer with nothing to bless himself with but a keen sense of the stage.

Yet ninety-nine out of a hundred of us talk more wildly, more superlatively, more ungrammatically every day of our lives over the loss of a collar-stud, the indiscretion of the cook, the erraticalness of the weather, or the fatuity of the War Office, than any character in melodrama. Under these conditions, we lose our sense of perspective and regard ourselves as mountains, everybody else as mole-hills. The veneer of civilization and a polite up-bringing disappears, and we stand forth in all our vulgarity and primality.

Count the number of “heavy fathers” you know, who lose all sense of humor and restraint, and curse and swear all over the house because some one has removed a penny lead-pencil from such and such a drawer in their desk while, all the while, it is more than probably reposing in their own pocket. Count, if you have the patience, the number of elderly “utility ladies,” who gnash their teeth and call on people to witness the momentary approaching end of the world because some one in the house happens to come down a quarter of an hour late for breakfast. Think of the number of “leading men” you have met who call on heaven to witness the fact that they are “off their drive,” and who wish they were dead when their long-overdue tailor’s bill is presented for immediate payment by the Tradesmen’s Protection Society. Consider the number of “leading ladies” there are who will tell you that you can save them from ruin if you will only catch the post with a postcard to a laundress, reprimanding her for a superabundance of starch, or who will announce to a startled world that they don’t care how soon they die because there is a slight fullness in the waist of a newly-arrived frock.

There is just as much life in melodrama as there is melodrama in life, the only difference between the two being that in melodrama the characters become bombastic over big things, and in life over quite unimportant ones.

This all goes to prove the necessity of assiduously cultivating the power of being able to look at ourselves from the outside—in other words, in cultivating a sense of humor. This sense is the only one which can save us from appearing egregious idiots, and it is the only sense which is utterly neglected. If it were taught us at our mother’s knee, rubbed into us at school and the ’varsity, and preached from the pulpit, murder would practically disappear, divorce become a thing of the past, and libel actions would seldom find a place in the list of cases. The quick application of a

sense of humor can turn even the most melodramatic situation into one of pure comedy.

If Viola Hay could have seen how ridiculous she looked when she swung Billy Hutton aside, she would never have given such a consummately good imitation of "The Worst Woman in London" when she banged the door behind her after crying, "Try, try, try!"

## XV

A FEW hours later found Hutton and Mrs. Hay alone again in the breakfast-room.

A gorgeous sunset, almost pantomimic in its coloring, was taking place, to the piping accompaniment of a full orchestra of birds.

The sky in the west had already undergone many rapid changes. Gold had turned into crimson, and the river no longer looked a stream of silver, but one of blood. All nature seemed to be watching the sun's triumphant progress. The breeze, enraptured, had forgotten to play among the leaves and grasses. Roses turned their faces up to watch; jasmine and clematis, honeysuckle and periwinkle and geranium leaned forward in order not to lose one detail of the spectacle. Daisies, buttercups and dandelions, the great lower class in the world of flowers, seemed to stand on tiptoe. Pansies were all eyes.

The only people too occupied with *ego* to see anything but themselves, were Billy and Viola. He paced up and down one end of the room, and she the other.

Neither spoke a word until the crimson had paled and the birds had finished their cantata. Then Hutton stopped in front of the clock, and uttered a smothered exclamation.

"You haven't horsewhipped my husband yet, I suppose?" asked Viola, with a sneer.

"Haven't had the opportunity," said Hutton, without looking at her.

"What a pity! They've come back, you know."

Hutton stopped, abruptly. "Come back? When?"

"Half an hour ago."

"Why?"

"To change for their cold supper. I should think that your wife will probably simplify matters by catching her death of cold. Evening dress in a punt! It's ridiculous!"

"I don't see why," said Hutton, shortly. "She has a warm cloak. It cost me fifty guineas. If she chooses to change, why shouldn't she?"

Viola shot out a laugh. "Oh, quite so! She can please herself. Some women don't mind looking foolish."

"Peg couldn't look foolish if she tried," muttered Billy, with a kind of sulky loyalty.

"Oh!"

"It's too absurd of Hay to think of punting in evening clothes. It's only done by lunatics and cavalry subalterns. He'll look a perfect fool." He commenced to pace the room again.

"I can't agree with you," said Viola, coldly. "It is impossible for Archie ever to look a fool, whatever he does. If he likes to preserve the cleanly habit of a change in the evening, why shouldn't he?"

Hutton kicked the leg of an unoffending chair viciously. "No reason at all. There's no law in this free country to prevent a man from making a fool of himself. What time will they be back from this full-dress moonlight picnic?"

"I haven't the least idea."

A silence fell. A perceptible shadow crept into the room. A party of merry people went down the river in an electric launch, singing a catch. Their voices, unaccompanied by any instrument, lingered musically upon the sleepy air, and finally died away. A solitary blackbird piped shrilly. Far away in the distance, the church clock intoned the hour. Lesser voices of clocks in the bungalow hastened to corroborate.

Hutton broke the silence.

"Are you going to your boudoir?" he asked, politely.

"No," said Mrs. Hay, with equal politeness.

"Going to stay here?"

"If you have no objection."

"Oh, no. I only thought that you must be getting tired. You seem to be taking a lot of exercise."

"I hope I don't bother you?"

"Good Lord, no! I was only thinking of your health."

Viola smiled disagreeably. "Very sweet of you," she said. "My health is vigorous, thanks very much. When you get tired, that chair is a most comfortable one."

Hutton disliked chaff more than anything else in the world. He pulled up short and looked at Viola doubtfully. "My prowling gets on your nerves, I'm afraid?"

"Oh, no! But I know how tired one gets after—long walks."

Hutton sat down instantly.

Viola looked relieved and a little triumphant. "You will remain on here, of course?" she said.

"Of course," returned Hutton, with decision.

"Of course," scornfully echoed Viola. "And when your wife takes my husband to your house, you will trot along after them."

Hutton looked up quickly. "To my house? What on earth do you mean?"

"That's the arrangement, you know."

"Is it? I'd like to see Hay put his nose inside my door!"

"For all his reserve of manner, my husband can be a very pleasant companion."

Hutton leaped out of his chair. "Pleasant companion!" he cried.

Viola watched him go to the window, tear a handful of leaves away from a youthful creeper, and fling them over the veranda.

"Well, you see," she added, in a matter-of-fact voice, "you don't intend to take any notice of these—well, unconventional proceedings, and so, doubtless, you will share the same roof. I dare say you will soon get used to it. Habit is a wonderful thing, and I can imagine my husband making a charming *ami de maison*."

Hutton became almost breathless.

"Mrs. Hay," he said, "I must ask you not to stand there and make these frightful suggestions. You—you take my breath away."

"But that's the arrangement, you know," she reiterated. "The pity of it is that after I have divorced my husband, you will be in the way of his marrying your wife."

"He shall never marry my wife!" cried Billy, almost hysterically.

"But that's the arrangement, you know." Mrs. Hay repeated the words as though they were a text. "Is it quite sporting of you to prevent it?"

"Sporting!"

"As your wife will be bound to appear in the divorce-court, she may insist on your divorcing her and settling the whole thing at one sitting. They are marvelously devoted—quite a boy-and-girl love-affair."

Billy began to be sensibly affected by the insidious way in which Viola made her points. From being pathetic, he grew angry.

"The way they're behaving," he said, loudly, "is simply disgraceful. It's worse than that—it's revolting. It's—it's—it's the scandal of the neighborhood."

"Of course it is. I shall certainly be able to call plenty of witnesses."

"They are out at all times of the day and night alone in a punt—in a punt, mind!"

"They think nothing of that," said Mrs. Hay, watching him closely.

"And the way they go on in the house is—is bean-feasty. It's shocking! It's horrible!"

"Oh, yes, it's all that. You've a very clear case. But," she added, preparing to shoot her final arrow, "you won't take any steps, naturally."

Hutton whipped around. "Why sha'n't I?"

"You have made up your mind, I gather, to wink at the immorality of it all."

"By gad, I haven't!"

"It suits my purpose well enough. I have no wish for you to divorce your wife. It will serve her right not to be able to marry Archie."



"Look here, Mrs. Hay," exclaimed Billy, "I have no intention of being made a catspaw in this matter. Whatever your opinion of this may be, I am not one of those men who condone flagrant immorality."

Viola had succeeded. If a woman wants to make an obstinate man go her way, she has only to pretend to pull him the other. It is called the policy of the pig.

"No?" she asked. "But what will you do?"

"Go up to-night, and help you institute proceedings."

It was well that it was nearly dark. Otherwise, Hutton would have seen a look of triumph flood Viola's beautiful face, and he then would have guessed that she had been working all the time to get him to say and think this.

"I suppose," she said, simulating indifference very cleverly, "that there's no dissuading you when once you have made up your mind?"

"In this case, certainly not."

"At any rate, I am going up by the nine-thirty. You had better share my brougham. Will it take you long to pack?"

"No; I can chuck my things together."

Mrs. Hay struggled to retain her indifference.

"Very well, then, we will travel to London together, and then go to different hotels. Mine is the Coburg. I suppose yours will be the Carlton?"

"That will do as well as another," said Billy, wishing to goodness he hadn't agreed.

Mrs. Hay opened the door.

"There will be some food in the boudoir in a few minutes. Perhaps you had better have some," she said.

## XVI

VIOLA's mind was made up. In the usual human manner, she had completely forgotten that her conduct had been the cause of all this unpleasantness. She never for a moment gave a thought to the fact that but for her

behavior with Billy nothing would have happened. She never for a moment realized that Archie and Peg were only doing precisely the same things that she and Billy had done, four short days before. She only considered how she had been treated. All she could think about was what, in her mind, she called Archie's disloyalty. But she didn't blame her husband so much as she blamed Mrs. Hutton. If you had asked her the reason of this, she would have had no other argument to put forward than, "because she did." A woman can always find excuses for a man, but she can never find a single one for a woman. And the fact that she may not be so much to blame as the man, only adds strength to her condemnation of the woman.

Revenge was the light that burned in front of Viola. She would be even with Peg, she said to herself, come what might. How dared she put her hands in her husband's and agree to his proposition? Any really nice woman would have refused at once, finally. How dared she take advantage of Archie's momentary weakness, and play with his sympathies as she had done? Beyond all, far beyond all, how dared she put up her hand and refuse to allow him to kiss her when he wanted to do so?

"Yes," she said to herself, over and over again, "I will be even with Peg." And so here she was, as kind-hearted, as charming, as well-bred a woman as one could wish to meet, making her preparation to institute proceedings which would divorce her from the one man in all the world whom she loved with her whole heart. Here she was, with a kind of fierce triumph, watching the packing of her trunks in order that, for the first time since their marriage, she might leave the husband she adored.

Of course, as you well know, revenge was not really the reason actuating Viola in her decision. It was that desire for martyrdom which is at the bottom of most of the utterly foolish things we men and women do in our little lives. It was what is colloqui-

ally known as spoiling one's face to spite one's nose—a foolish and a painful process, by which nothing is gained.

## XVII

LEFT alone, Billy sat down in the nearest chair, and wished with all his heart that he had never been born. He didn't arrive at this conclusion quite at once. It was led up to by a number of wishes.

First of all, he wished he had never known Hay. They had been close friends since they were mutually eleven. He had looked upon Archie as one of the best. But he had behaved in a manner which had made it impossible for him to be classed among officers and gentlemen. Would any really decent chap spend hours alone in a punt with another man's wife?

Then he wished he had never met Viola. He owned to himself that she was very beautiful, with an extraordinary fascination, but it was impossible to get away from the fact that she had wilfully led him on. How was it possible for him to have kissed her if she had made up her mind not to allow him to do so? Flirtation with her meant nothing more, so far as he was concerned, he told himself, than a desire to kill time, pleasantly. Of course, his sense of the artistic had been appealed to by her beauty, but what harm was there in being an artist?

Then he wished that the Hays' expensive and complete bungalow had been at the bottom of the river; and then, with a feeling of dull anger and disgust, that he had never been persuaded by Viola to go up to London and help her to drag Peg—the best wife any man in this world ever had—through those horrible courts; finally, like all slightly fleshy men, with susceptible natures and self-indulgent characteristics, that he had never been born.

He had no time to arrive at any further conclusions before he heard Hay enter the room with a quick, light step.

The room was by this time quite dark. Hutton jumped up, breathing hard.

Hay touched the electric buttons, and stood facing him in a blaze of light.

## XVIII

"OH, you're back, then?" said Archie, looking immaculately cool in evening clothes.

"I regret being obliged to trespass on your hospitality—" began Billy.

"Not at all," replied Hay. "Have a cigarette."

Hutton glared at him. "No, thanks. I have only returned to pack my things, and take myself off."

"Oh!" said Hay, lighting a cigarette. "Must you go?"

His imperturbability, his effrontery, as Billy inwardly called it, infuriated Hutton. He went up to Hay and stood in front of him, quivering with rage.

"I have known you pretty well for fifteen years," he said, "but if any one had told me you were this kind of chap I should have knocked him down."

"What kind of chap?" asked Hay, quietly.

Hutton's feelings of righteous indignation rose like a tidal wave. "The kind of chap," he shouted, "who ruins a friend's home by taking away his wife."

Hay blew out a cloud of tobacco smoke, and thoughtfully threw the ash of his cigarette into the grate. "It would interest me to know what you call that kind of chap."

"I call him what every decent-minded man calls him—a detestable blackguard."

"So do I," replied Hay, looking straight into Hutton's angry eyes.

"And yet," Hutton continued, at the top of his voice, "that's what you have deliberately done. Not content with ruining my home, you've smashed up the perfect relationship which existed between me and my wife, and driven her into the worst path a woman can ever enter."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Hay, with a faint smile. "How?"

"How? How? You appeal to her sentimentality, you take her out in a punt—a punt, mind you—morning, noon and night, you kiss her openly and you carry on like a love-sick calf on his honeymoon. That's how you've done it. And what's the consequence?"

"Tell me. I'm exceedingly interested."

Hutton became almost eloquent. "You've broken your wife's heart, you've turned her into a hard, bitter woman. You've made me a sour, disappointed man, and you will be the cause of dragging my wife through the divorce-court. That's what you've done, and I call it low—low!"

Hay held himself in with a supreme effort of will. "Oh!" he said. "And so you call it low, do you?"

"Yes, I do!" cried Hutton, in a fever of indignation and moral rectitude. "And what the devil do you mean by it?"

Hay pitched his cigarette out of one of the windows, and leaned over the back of a chair toward Hutton. When he spoke there was an under-current of anger in his voice which made it tremble.

"What the devil did *you* mean by your behavior with my wife when you carried her away, day after day, and when you held her in your arms in the backwater a hundred yards from here?"

With an air of intense surprise, Hutton drew back a step. "Nothing," he replied; "absolutely nothing. It was the merest flirtation. I often do it. You can't say that *I've* done anything."

"I can tell you what you have just escaped doing. You have just escaped doing precisely those things which you accuse me of having done, and if you hadn't chanced to possess the truest, straightest, most loyal little woman in the world, the only woman I have ever known with a sense of humor, you would have landed all of us in that divorce-court you talk

so much about, by the very thing you call a flirtation."

"I—I—" Billy gasped.

Hay's voice broke a little. "It meant nothing to you—all this. You merely passed the time. But I am one of those miserable beggars who are cursed with the most horrible of all characteristics—jealousy, and this flirtation of yours was driving the blood into my brain, making the sun black and my whole life wretched."

There was no longer any aggression about Billy. He was thoroughly and completely ashamed of himself. He had never before seen his old friend so deeply moved, or heard him make a confession of his feelings so frank, so whole-hearted. But he made one final attempt.

"And—and what about me?" he asked.

"What about you?" said Hay, lightly. "Find your wife, my dear chap, and ask her to explain the workings of the little game we've been playing."

"Game?"

"Yes, man, game. We've been pretending to do exactly what you were doing in earnest."

Billy was completely flabbergasted.

"Play-acting, do you mean?"

"Precisely."

"But why?"

"To give you a chance of seeing how you liked the thing you made us endure."

A sort of mist fell away from Billy's eyes. He clapped his hands on his knees, and broke into a roar of laughter.

"But you didn't calculate on being taken seriously, did you? Of course," he added, with an inimitable touch of effrontery, "I knew all along, and I played up for all I was worth, just for the fun of the thing. . . . But what about your wife? Do you know what this play-acting of yours has driven her to?"

"What do you mean?" asked Hay, showing symptoms of alarm.

Hutton went off into irrepressible laughter. "Look in the hall—that's all I ask you to do."

"What's the matter with the hall?"

"Bit by bit, all the luggage Vi has is being jabbed down in the hall to catch the nine-thirty to Paddington!"

"What?" gasped Hay.

"The biter fairly bit, by Jove! Splendid! Ho, ho, ho! Splendid!"

Hutton's laughter reverberated in the room, remained in the veranda and followed him across the lawn.

Hay waited a moment, afraid to look in the hall. Then, with a run, he crossed the room and flung back the door.

There, carefully labeled and strapped, reposed, impatiently, three dress trunks, three hat-boxes and a jewel-case. Upon each was painted the magic letters, "V. H."

## XIX

"ARE you all alone, Archie?" asked Mrs. Billy, in her merriest voice.

She found Hay, profoundly moved, staring at the trunks.

"Vi's going," he said. "She's leaving me."

Peg examined the labels, and saw that they were all addressed to the Coburg Hotel.

"Stuff and nonsense!" she said. "She's taking a leaf out of our book. She's pretending."

"No; she is in earnest. Billy's just told me so."

"Dear old Billy!"

"She's dressing to catch the nine-thirty to Paddington."

"I don't believe it," said Peg. "I'm prepared to bet you a nice new pipe that all these things are empty. Try them, and see for yourself. I'm going up for my cloak. I won't keep you a minute."

But Hay didn't try them; he was afraid. He could see pretty plainly that the psychological moment had arrived. He realized with infinite relief and thankfulness that, as a factor in the affair, Billy no longer counted. There was no longer any reason for jealousy. But no one knew better than he that Vi seldom forgave people

who wounded her vanity. They might spread false reports about her, they might criticize unfavorably the management of her *ménage*; she snapped her fingers at such things. Let them, however, tread on her self-conceit, and she became a tigress.

No woman so hated tricks played upon her as she. Practical-joking she held in abhorrence. Even chaff she could not tolerate. What would she say upon being told, as he was now bound to tell her, that he and Peg had been playing a huge trick? Even if she had not already made up her mind to leave him, this was more than enough to make her.

Curiously enough—or not curiously, when one remembers the contradictions of human nature—he couldn't help being glad that she was putting herself to so much trouble for his sake. It proved to him, quite conclusively, that she was jealous, and that, more than anything else, made him certain that she still loved him.

Then he tried to lift one of the trunks. He could just move it, and that was all.

Mrs. Billy had lost.

## XX

VIOLA left her bedroom, and went quickly down-stairs. She stopped for a moment in the hall, and swiftly examined each label and each lock.

She passed straight to her desk, and wrote out her address for the servants. She heard some one moving in the room, and spoke without looking up.

"I don't think there is time for you to get anything to eat, now. The brougham is at the door. I think we had better go before they come down."

"I am already down, Viola," said Hay. "I hope in time."

Viola wheeled round. "In time for what, pray?" she asked, her head in the air.

Hay spoke very gently. "In time to persuade you not to take this journey."

"I fear," replied his wife, bending again over the desk, "that even your

remarkable powers of persuasion will fail in this case. The carriage is at the door."

Hay rang the bell. "We will send the carriage away, I think."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I am anxious for a little talk with you, Viola, if you will spare me a few minutes."

"I can give you two minutes," she said, coldly.

"I regret that two minutes will be hardly enough." He turned to Stanner. "Mrs. Hay will not require the brougham, after all."

Stanner looked a hundred questions, bowed hurriedly and left the room.

Viola was furious. She flung down her pen, and let the lid of the desk fall with a bang.

"How dare you countermand my orders to the servants?"

"I beg your pardon," replied Hay, "but there seemed no other way, for the moment, in which to persuade you to give me a few more minutes than two."

Viola crossed the room to ring the bell, but Hay intercepted her with a quiet, quick movement.

"Ring the bell, I insist!" she cried.

Hay stood firm.

"You can catch a later train, if you wish to do so when you have heard what I have to say. It will make us both look a little foolish, if you give another order now."

Mrs. Hay's hand fell to her side. "Then perhaps you will be good enough to tell Stanner to order the brougham for the ten-thirty."

She sat on the settee, and tapped the floor angrily with her foot. The light from a carefully shaded electric lamp fell upon her face. Hay thought that he had never seen her looking more beautiful—or less likely to waver from her intention.

"I will order the carriage at any time you choose when you and I have finished our little talk," he said.

"Many thanks," she replied, deliberately turning her back upon him.

Hay went a little nearer. His manner was studiously quiet and self-con-

trolled. He didn't allow a single tremor to show itself in his voice, or a sign of his extremely mixed feelings to appear on his face.

"Viola," he asked, "will you please tell me where you intend going to-night?"

"Certainly. To the Coburg Hotel."

"May I ask what your object is in leaving the bungalow?"

"As you will so soon know, I really don't see any reason why I shouldn't gratify your curiosity."

"Thank you."

"I am leaving you," she said, a little wildly.

"So I imagined."

"I am going to institute proceedings for a divorce."

"Ah?"

"Mrs. Hay *versus* Mr. Hay and Mrs. Hutton."

"I see."

Viola was compelled to look at her husband. His total lack of astonishment or annoyance irritated her beyond words. "It doesn't seem to cause you the least surprise," she said.

"Well, yes, it does," replied Hay. "I know you to be a clever woman, and this shows such a wilful lack of knowledge of the law, on your part."

"What do you mean by a knowledge of the law? I don't see that the law has got anything to do with it."

"To a certain extent, it has," said Hay, politely. "The law renders it impossible for you to be divorced from me."

"What!" cried Viola. "After the way you have been behaving?"

"Certainly."

"Day after day, alone, constantly kissing?"

"But never alone."

"Never alone?"

"Never alone. You were always within sight, and generally within hearing."

"How do you know?"

"We saw you."

"You knew that I was following you about?"

"Always; otherwise, we shouldn't have pretended to make love."



"Pretended to make love!" echoed Viola, scornfully.

Hay went nearer, and allowed a little feeling to creep into his voice. "We pretended, in the hope that you and Hutton might realize what kind of thing you had made us—Mrs. Billy and I—suffer."

Viola left her chair, and stood facing her husband. "To dream that I could believe such a fairy-tale!" she cried. "Pretended to make love! . . . Why, in this very room . . ."

"If you had watched more carefully in this very room you would have seen how truly we were pretending." And then his self-control broke down. He put out his hand appealingly, and his voice shook with tenderness. "Vi, in your heart you know that there is only one woman on God's earth for me!"

Viola waved his hand away. "And that woman is Mrs. William Hutton."

"And that woman is my wife."

Viola burst into a hysterical peal of laughter.

"Good heavens! you must think me an imbecile! After all I've gone through, after all I've seen and heard, to ask me to believe that you were pretending! Are we children, that we play these games?"

"It seemed to me," said Hay, "that a far more dangerous game than pretending was on foot. It seemed to me that if you and Hutton——"

"That old story!" cried Viola. "Isn't it rather a mean thing to try and hide behind that?"

"Old story? Four days ago."

"And in those four days, what have you done?" Viola felt that she was losing ground. She felt that all the time she had been laboring under a misapprehension, that all her suffering, all her sleepless nights, all her jangles with Billy, had been brought about by herself. None of this would have occurred if she had not done with Billy very much the same thing she was accusing her husband of doing with Peg. She wouldn't haul her flag down without an effort. So she lost her temper in the usual womanly manner in such circumstances.

"The indelicacy of it all," she continued. "Before my very eyes! Thrusting your double life upon me! Forcing your wife to notice the violence of your love for your mistress!"

The blood flooded Hay's face.

"That's enough," he said. "I will order your carriage for the ten-thirty."

Before Viola could muster up courage and sink her pride sufficiently to say how sorry she was to have said such a horrible thing—a thing she didn't mean, and never for a moment believed, Hay had gone to the window, and Mrs. Billy was on the veranda.

"I can't find my old man," whispered Peg. "What luck have you had?"

Hay raised his voice loudly enough for Viola to hear. It was shaking with temper.

"I regret to tell you, Mrs. Billy, that your kind help has been of no avail. The Hay-Hutton episode will reach its termination in the divorce-court."

He went out into the darkness. The two women were face to face.

## XXI

"ARCHIE seems a trifle perturbed," said Peg. "For the first time in his life his tie was crooked. I wonder if you can tell me what he meant?"

"Precisely what he said," replied Viola, coldly.

Peg sat down, and held a bunch of roses to her nose. "Dear me! May one know more? Don't tell me that Archie is going to divorce you!"

"I'm afraid you don't quite understand the position of affairs," said Viola.

"They seem very exciting. I should so like to know. I promise not to tell any one."

Viola began putting on her gloves, paying great attention to the exact fit of each finger. "You will know quite soon enough. You are intimately connected with the case."

"Connected with a divorce case!" cried Peg, with a gurgle of delight. "Oh, Viola, consider the opportunity

for Paquin. I must go up to London and be photographed. All the illustrated papers will want my picture. People will think I am in the smart set. I shall become a notoriety. But *do* tell me where I come in."

"You will occupy the unenviable position of co-respondent," said Viola, contemptuously.

Peg broke into ripples of laughter. "How delicious! How excruciating!"

Viola surveyed her icily. "You're easily amused," she said.

"*Easily* amused! My dear Viola, haven't you any idea how funny you are?"

Viola drew herself up, with an air of almost matronly dignity. "I am thankful to say that a sense of decency still remains to me," she said.

Peg wiped her eyes, and watched Viola with intense amusement. "Although," she asked, sweetly, "you had such a—well, hardly tepid affair with my Billy?"

The third finger of her left hand occupied Viola's whole attention. "It is not in my nature to joke at the annihilation of two houses," she remarked, going off at a tangent.

"Oh," said Peg. "I'm not laughing at that, believe me."

"Indeed? If I had forgotten myself as you have I can hardly imagine giving way to such a disgusting exhibition of levity."

"My dear Viola, do forgive me, but it's the most humorous suggestion I have ever heard. I—a co-respondent! It's unique! It's whimsical!"

"I trust you may find it so," said Viola, primly. "It is positively odious to me to see a woman of your age treating her sins as though they were burrs stuck to her dress."

"My sins? Oh, dear, it's not so much my sins that amuse me, as your absolute ignorance of our English divorce laws."

"I fail to understand you."

"Do tell me how you hope to get a divorce from Archie."

"There will be no difficulty after what I have seen and heard."

"And do you really think that your bare word will be sufficient?"

"There's your husband's testimony, as well."

"Billy's testimony?" Peg exploded again. "Billy? Is Billy going to help you? Have you persuaded him to give me up?"

Viola rose. Her attitude and expression were those of a deeply injured woman, driven to extremities. "I have got his promise to give evidence against you—you perfectly disgraceful woman. How *can* you sit there laughing in that shameless, callous way when you well know that you have ruined two homes and spoiled the life of a man like Archie for the mere gratification of an overweening vanity? It—it paralyzes me, and yet I can hardly contain myself! To think that I—I should have been subjected to these indignities by you!"

"Yes, I see your point," said Peg, quietly. "You never read your paper, do you?"

"No, thank heaven!"

"I quite agree with you; but if you did, you would see that although you may spend twelve thousand pounds in twelve days, engage twelve eminent K.C.'s, and wear twelve costumes to dazzle the eyes of twelve little men in a box, the judge will say to you, 'Nonsense, my dear Mrs. Archibald Hay; you've come to me with a mare's nest. You haven't a tittle of evidence! Go home and study the law.'"

Viola went close to Mrs. Billy's chair, and spoke with barely suppressed rage.

"Do you suppose that I am thinking merely of the result, Margaret Hutton? I have one desire only—to see you disgraced. A woman who is taken through the divorce-court never loses the stain, even though a thousand judges and jurymen can't agree. I will ruin you, whatever it costs me."

Peg grew very serious. There was something so decisive, so bitter in Viola's tone that she was unable to do anything but realize that the situation she had worked so hard to render

pleasant was far worse now than it had ever been.

"In your present mood," she replied, "I believe you would, and I am rather ashamed of my laughter. I thought I knew you, after all these years. It is quite time, I see, that I tried to make you see things as they are, and not as you imagine them to be. To start with, Billy will never go with you to London." Viola smiled. "At the moment, he is like nothing so much as a St. Bernard dog with his tail caught in the door. I have only to whistle, and the dear old thing will come leaping to heel. You can't have found him so strong-minded as to risk a cross-examination on this affair?"

Viola made an uneasy movement, and shifted her position.

"As to evidence," continued Peg, "which would justify counsel in letting you take the case into a court, how can you possess evidence of a thing that hasn't happened?"

"Hasn't happened?"

"Hasn't happened. Archie has kissed me only once."

"In this very room, I saw——"

"You saw him kiss me once, two inches away from my ear."

"I wonder how you will convince a jury of that?" asked Viola, with a sneer.

"A jury can generally be convinced in England," said Peg.

"Well, you will have an opportunity soon of putting their credulity to the test."

Peg crossed the room, and put her hand on Mrs. Hay's shoulder. "I hope not, Viola, for your sake. You and I have known each other for a long time, haven't we? All those years at school, and ever since, we've been very close friends. I see now how it is my fault that this danger threatens us both."

"There!" cried Viola, "you own it."

"My fault in allowing Billy to practise his usual methods with you."

"Usual methods? What do you mean?"

"We have been married six years. You constitute his sixth flirtation."

"I? Billy told me I was the only woman he had ever really loved."

"For the seventh time," said Peg, "he is capable of saying that as often as most men take tabloids. Billy cares for only one woman, my dear Viola; but Billy is a born flirt. It is the salt of life to him. Poor old Billy! And now that he finds a bunch of gray hair at his temples, he longs to prove to his own satisfaction that he is still capable of attracting. To make a beautiful woman believe that he loves her is, to Billy, as exciting as winning the Derby."

Viola gave an exclamation of disbelief.

"Then, Viola, my dear, I know that flirting is the breath of your nostrils, too. You wanted to see if you couldn't, as usual, lay Billy low. Well, knowing this, and knowing you both, I saw no harm in allowing the affair which I knew would work out quite quickly and quite harmlessly, to go on; but I had not reckoned with Archie. He is quite another kind of temperament. For that reason, I was wrong not to pull Billy up. Archie has suffered intolerably. I feel grieved for him and ashamed of myself, for I could so easily have saved him from suffering by speaking a word to Billy at the outset. Archie has only one idea in his head—you. His whole life is you. You are his only thought, his only care, his only love."

"I was," said Viola, tearfully, "until you came and stole him away."

"My dear," said Peg, gently, "he doesn't care two straws for me."

"What have you been doing, then?"

"We've been playing a little comedy; we've been acting the parts that you and Billy were playing so well, just to show you in what kind of light you both appeared to us."

"That's the excuse Archie made. I don't believe it."

"My dear Vi," said Peg, "don't let us, whatever we do, turn our little comedy into a melodrama. It is this that I have tried to avoid all through. On my honor, I am telling the truth."



Viola wavered. She struggled to maintain her anger, but it had died.

"I am to believe," she asked, in a subdued voice, "that you and Archie have not been flirting, after all?"

"My dear," said Peg, with a little laugh, "if you only knew how profoundly difficult I found it to persuade Archie even to pretend! Why, I had to coach him in whispers whenever you were present. Even as an amateur actor, he was not consistently good. He could never remember his cues, and all the time he was so afraid of hurting you."

"Was he?" said Viola, softly.

"Yes. When you walked so many miles after us, it was, 'Poor darling, how she hates walking!' When I said, 'Archie, it's going well, she's jealous,' it was, 'Poor darling, isn't it horrible!'"

"Was it?" asked Viola, putting a finger on her cheek to arrest a too active tear.

"Think, my dear Vi, what I had to contend against. And yet, after all my energy, all my endeavors to act for the best, I've done no good."

"How?" cried Viola, frightened.

"You've taken us so seriously that you are leaving Archie forever. I have only helped you to break his heart."

Viola turned suddenly, and threw everything—pride, anger, humiliation, self-disgust—to the winds.

"Break his heart! Oh, Peg, do you think it would break his heart if I went away?"

Archie came into the room. Peg, with her eyes, commanded him to stay, and held out her arms to Viola.

"Oh, Peg, Peg, forgive me! I swear to you by all that's sacred in the world that I flirted with Billy only because I was miserable. Archie never tells me that he loves me now. I want to be *told*, I want to be *told*! I love him much more than I used to do, but he never says the things he used to say; he is always so reserved, and treats me as a wife, an institution. You can't think how I long to hear him say, 'I love you, I love you!'"

Without any prompting, Archie

sprang forward and took his wife out of Peg's arms. "Vi, sweetheart, I love you, I love you!"

"Archie!"

"It has all been my fault; I was afraid to say how much I loved you. I thought it would bore you, or that you would laugh at me. But, oh, my dear, I've no words to tell you how I love you—how much you are to me. Every beat of my heart is for you."

Peg made no secret of crying. She took out her handkerchief, and dabbed her cheeks vigorously. Through her tears there was a kind of laugh, and in her eyes an immense gladness.

"Of course this is too perfectly delightful," she said, "and I should like nothing better than to cry like a baby on both your shoulders for a solid three-quarters of an hour, but I can see Billy's cigar coming up the garden, and it won't do for him to find me wet-eyed. He'll think I'm crying about him, and begin to buck."

"Mrs. Billy," began Archie, holding out his hand.

"Not now, Archie. I'm so happy that if you say anything now I shall be bound to cry my nose red, and how can a woman with a red nose give a curtain lecture to her husband?"

"I see," said Hay, with a gay laugh. "Come, Vi, let's get out into the air; God's in His heaven!"

## XXII

"HE never tells me that he loves me!" sobbed Viola. "I want to be told! I want to be told!" And in this cry from a woman's heart lies one of the secrets of how to be less unhappy, though married.

Good women are made up of many curious ingredients. Mixed up with their faithfulness and obstinacy, their kind-heartedness and their desire for the moon, their courage in difficulties and their impatience under the criss-cross matters of life, their power of self-sacrifice and their unbridled extravagance, there is always a never-to-be-satisfied desire, however common-

place they may be, for what is romantic. A woman likes to persuade herself that the man she has married looks upon her as the only woman in the world whom he could possibly have married, that he has eyes for no other woman, that she has been elevated by him to a position far above the heads of her sisters. Everything and everybody she meets persuades her to a contrary belief; her own observation convinces her that it is not so; her own intuition settles the question unalterably. Nevertheless, the desire remains, and the only way it can be partially satisfied is to be told daily, bi-daily, if possible hourly, by her husband, that he loves her, that he adores her, that she is an angel. He doesn't really convince her that he is speaking the truth, but reiteration comforts. Therefore, if a man knows this, it is not only wise of him, but it is his duty, to tell his wife these things as often as she desires to have them told.

There are cases where a husband can honestly and sincerely say that his wife is the one woman he loves in the world. Granted that he is a well-bred member of society whom his wife can respect and admire, then the marriage is one that has been made in heaven.

There are others where a man can very nearly be honest and sincere when he tells his wife the thing she so much desires to hear. That marriage is also made in heaven.

But there are the Lord knows how many others where a man cannot say with any honesty whatever any of the things which these other men can say, and if they could, they wouldn't. These are the marriages that are of the earth, earthy. They are disastrous, horrible, ignoble and were better ended.

A woman is like an instrument. Play the right notes at the right moment and the result is harmony. Play the wrong ones . . . !

All this applies equally to the man.

After all, there is lots of room for silence in the grave.

## XXIII

BILLY's cigar came nearer and nearer, and then gleamed in the doorway.

Peg was sitting in the most comfortable chair, in the most comfortable attitude; her hands were crossed peacefully in her lap; she hummed a little song.

Billy walked slowly into the room with his eyes upon her, and stood in front of her.

"I'm back," he said.

Peg looked up at him with a mild expression of surprise.

"Oh, good evening, Billy. Let me see, you've been in bed, haven't you? I hope you're better?"

"I don't think I shall ever be the same man again," he replied, gloomily.

"Were you as bad as all that?"

There followed a short silence.

"I knew that you and Archie were only play-acting."

Peg smothered a laugh. "Oh, you knew, did you?"

"Of course, I knew. I'm not a fool. Archie is an extremely good chap—one of the best, and all that, but, hang it, hardly the man you'd fancy in that kind of way."

"Oh!"

Billy dropped the ash of his cigarette on the floor, and put his foot on it. "Oh, hang it, no; all the same, it was not a very sporting trick to play. It was horrible while it lasted. I found another white hair this morning!"

Peg hardly dared look at him. "I've always heard," she said, quietly, "that too much bed is bad for the hair."

"Oh, what rot! Er——"

He paused uncomfortably, and ran his fingers up and down the back of a chair.

"Yes?"

"I've made it all right between those two."

Peg sat up. "Oh, you did that, did you?" she asked, interestedly.

"Course I did. I had to speak pretty straight to Archie."

Peg gave way, and laughed and laughed and laughed.

"Oh, well," added Billy, "it's all right now, anyhow. We won't quarrel as to who did it. I wish to goodness you'd stop laughing and humming silly songs like a disinterested bee. Why laugh?"

"It isn't a bit funny," said Peg, almost exhausted, "is it?"

Billy flung away his cigar, and made a stride to Peg's chair. "I say, Peg, I want to tell you something. You won't chip me if I tell you?"

"My dear William! I am not a sculptor."

He hesitated, looking, for once in his life, almost shy.

"Well, look here. I read in some

book or other that at about thirty-five a man begins to lose whatever looks he had and the power of making pretty women interested in him."

"Well?" encouraged Peg.

"Well, d'ye see, I thought I'd try."

He suddenly went on his knees, and put his arms roughly round his wife.

"Peg, you little wretch, I adore you! I always have and I always shall. Don't you know that, darling old girl?"

Peg tightened her arms, and put her face silently up to his.

"Ha! ha! That's all right, then. Everything's comfortable again, and—and there's an end."

"Yes, old man," said Peg, with a laugh, "and a beginning."



## DECEIVED

IT is only the same old story—  
I trusted a woman's face;  
I gazed on her hair's bright glory,  
And her figure's lissome grace.

Her eyes were so near to weeping  
As she pled for a man's great trust,  
I'd have given my soul to her keeping,  
So I yielded—as all men must.

But, fickle as any sailor,  
She left me to vain regret;  
(I am a ladies' tailor—  
And she owes for her habit yet!)

S. DECATUR SMITH, JR.



## THE REST CURE

JAGGLES—Did you ever know any one to be benefited by this absent treatment?

WAGGLES—Yes, indeed. Look how poor Henpeck picks up every Summer as soon as he has sent his wife away to the country.

## BEETHOVEN'S SONATA APPASSIONATA

By Arthur Stringer

IN distant rooms, above sad wind and rain,  
 She, who her grieving heart could utter not,  
 Weighed down with wearied love's too-golden chain,  
 Lures from low keys this glory tear-enwrought;  
 And with bent head I listen, and I know  
 (As he once knew, who through her speaks again)  
 That gladness, at its greatest, walks with woe,  
 That music, at its deepest, dwells with pain!

For luting through Earth's loneliness and gloom,  
 A second Orpheus of more frenzied soul,  
 He came to us, who groped as from a tomb  
 For that free air down which his music stole.  
 He, from his more harmonious world of song  
 Crept in to us, who dreamed with heavy eyes  
 And heard his lyre, and then could only long,  
 Half madly, for life's unremembered skies!  
 And, like Eurydice, we yearned again  
 To tread some lost and more melodious air,  
 Where once we too had known that happier strain  
 And once our exiled feet were wont to fare!

A gleam of lives more golden but long gone,  
 A thin, strange echo of celestial things,  
 Came to us, and forgotten glories shone  
 From out the fires of Earth's remembrings.  
 Then, then we knew our Dusk once had its Dawn,  
 And all those dreams that tease our mortal breast,  
 All, all those ways we would, yet could not, reach,  
 All, all our vain desires, our old unrest,  
 In Song he woke, that long had slept in speech!  
 For he had heard that low Uranian strain  
 That must divinely madden him who hears;  
 And they on high beheld the god-like pain  
 That mocked his soul, and closed his mortal ears!

So thou, sad angel exile, on low keys,  
 Through wind and rain, in quiet rooms afar,  
 Seeking this immemorial ache to ease  
 And flinging forth against each mortal bar  
 Once more his immemorial harmonies,  
 With hands that are as wings, from star to star  
 Now bearest me away, past earthly seas  
 To some old Home, where God and Music are!

# EDWARD VII., AMBASSADOR

By Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P.

THE secret of King Edward's influence upon foreign affairs lies in the fact that he is powerful, influential, and mediatory, without being directly responsible. When a Government acts, every move or word has a force beyond the significance of the moment, it may be; even its preliminary motions toward negotiation or business become weighted with public and press comment, while the Government it approaches has no greater freedom for manœuvre, and feels that each step may be one impossible to retrace, each word capable of misinterpretation or misuse.

King Edward's recent adventures in the domain of diplomacy have had the advantage of being unofficial in an administrative sense, yet of being a move by the head of the people toward *rapport* with another people—the contact being vivid and personal. The strength of his position lies in the fact that he does represent, that he does express with extraordinary accuracy the feelings and motives which are emerging, or have emerged, from the public mind. Heads of parties try to create two sets of public opinion, which travel by different paths. The one or the other must be more or less in the wrong, but there are large national questions, not lying within the province of direct legislation, with which Governments or parties cannot deal, which the public cannot focus of themselves, which no citizen, however popular or trusted, can captain. These questions lie within the influence of, and are ready for the practical leadership of one who has no temptation to play the demagogue, who has no fear

of being charged with self-seeking, and who holds in dutiful and high solicitude the welfare and progress of his people.

Undoubtedly, the recent notable and epoch-making agreement between England and France is the direct outcome of King Edward's diplomacy. The visit of President Loubet to England, in response to that of our monarch to France, created a mutual national sympathy which begot confidence in the *bona fides* of two nations, created an atmosphere out of which treaties of settlement could come without international suspicion. Ministers cannot create this sympathy or this atmosphere; it is the breath of life of a people, and the heads of the clans—the rulers of England and France, champions of national honor—made it the breath of peace and understanding. Decades of distrust and jealousy and warped judgment were suddenly swallowed in the flood of good feeling of 1903. English insularity had and has no interpreter in King Edward, and English candor has found in him its most superb and effective exponent. It was easy for M. Delcassé and Lord Lansdowne to throw a pontoon over the stream of Anglo-French difficulties, over which they were able to speak to each other with the good-will and confidence of two nations behind them. The pontoon may yet become a bridge, permanent and admired, a monument to human art rather than to administrative craft.

While this international *rapport* increases, it has not developed suspicion or anger in other nations, for they also have felt the spirit of this new royal



diplomacy in their own countries, and they are well aware that there is nothing sinister or oblique in King Edward's purposes. They are well aware that he aims, not at British advantage over a foreign neighbor in some new international deal, but rather at clearing the ground of present differences, by wiping out old scores through mutual concessions rather than through going one better in a fresh maneuver, so adding to the long account of parry and thrust.

King Edward is not slim, and his policy has no slimness. Germany and Italy, the Emperor and King Victor, see that the machinery of negotiation and administration in Europe will run more smoothly, if England and France, who have common, if not equal, responsibilities in Egypt, in the New Hebrides, in China, and elsewhere, compromise in details while making the most of their separate national policies. Hitherto, the adjustment of policies has been made difficult by the jealous and bitter conflict of details, and smooth words have only covered stubborn subterranean opposition.

Good understanding between England and France is a guarantee of the peace of Europe; for the attitude of France with Russia and Germany is such that the friendly influence of England and France in the relations of England with Russia, or of France with Germany, must of necessity have great weight in any critical or troublesome period. It is significant that Russia does not resent the Anglo-French *rapprochement*. It bodes no ill to Russia, seeing that her hands are full with Japan; and it is to her advantage that her ally should be working harmoniously with her rival in Asia, knowing as she does that England, never the aggressor against her, will be little tempted to become one at a time when she is binding in diplomatic friendship her own trusted ally. This significant situation has sprung from the act of the King of England, taken on his own initiative, and to him must be the credit of putting the

sponge in the hands of old combatants for wiping the slate clean.

From this centre of his first diplomacy has come closer and friendlier relations with Italy, and Portugal, and Austria, with whom we have no differences. Germany, with whom our differences are mostly industrial, realizes that this friendship with France is a guarantee of peace, and peace to develop her Colonial Empire, which is likely to become a grave anxiety to her, as her late troubles with Africa bear witness, is a thing she greatly desires. It was genius on the part of the King to aim at the Anglo-French *rapprochement*; it will be national stupidity if the promise of wide beneficial consequences is not fulfilled. If our press will continue to pursue a dignified and conciliatory course, the people may be trusted to do the same, and a high example will have been followed to good purpose.

Thus, in the hands of a ruler in a limited monarchy lie opportunities for statesmanship which are never given to rulers more absolute. Every act of the absolute ruler, or of one who, like the German Emperor, is head of the army, and can control the powers or deeds of the state, becomes a semi-official act practically committing the state, if not the people, to the policy involved in that act. The sovereign of England may hold views, and express them, contrary to the opinion or will of the people, and still not disturb at all the working of the constitution, or affect injuriously the process of legislation. In opposition to his ministers he is powerless, though he may impede the machinery, and may vex the administration; but his power when moving with his ministers, and according to the temper of his people, is very great. He can assist the development of wise public opinion, he can in certain spheres lead it, as the Prince Consort—though not an English sovereign—did in the matter of scientific education and industrial progress; he can deftly make concrete what hitherto has been fluid in public thought and policy, he can think with the citizen

and, like a true artist, which in many respects King Edward is, he can give the public one voice.

Let us briefly inquire into those qualities which make the King successful as a diplomatist, which give him his personal equipment. It is significant that our present sovereign has made no tactical mistakes, has, both as Prince of Wales and King, turned the flank of more than one false movement, and has, by his intelligence and skill, won the admiration of intellectual men. He has been called shrewd, but I prefer to think of him as a man of temperament and imagination, with an instinct as keen as that of a dramatist, or painter, and with the impulses of the instinct rationalized by wide and high experience, and by the best of knowledge—that directly gained *viva voce* from the ablest men of the world. In such associations, in this sort of tuition, he has had the heart of the thing laid bare, the essentials concisely presented for him to apply at once in the discharge of his public duties. I believe that the King is naturally one of the most impulsive men in his empire, but his intellectual qualities, and his capacity for comparison, historical and immediate, his curious ability in feeling what “the other man is thinking,” have steadied to powerful use that temperament which, left to flourish unhampered by the convention of duty, necessity, and high responsibility, might have been called genius. In truth, the King has genius of a kind, if he is not to be called a genius, happily for himself. All that rare faculty for saying and doing the right thing, for remembering faces and incidents, and people and places—it is all the equipment of the man of temperament, it is the secret of his popularity. Geniality is no name for it, for he feels when to be genial and he knows when to be “icily regular.” He is too powerful in temperament to be merely “genial.” With such a temperament as he possesses, there is also dormant in His Majesty a certain irascibility, due to his capacity to feel strongly, to the sharp decision of his mind. He is no

waverer, he does not need to lean on others, and he has a keen impatience with the dull or the inane; but long ago the native irascibility was brought—and kept—under control. Still, the capacity to be wilful—to be impetuous, to be impulsive—lies at the very root of his strength. It all belongs to his influence upon men, quite apart from the power in the state which he represents. Men who know the things that count in intellectual equipment have never underrated the King’s knowledge; and his capacity for seeing all sides of a question, though he is known to take one side very strongly, and that not from natural predilection but according to his own judgment, right or wrong.

The King speaks better than most men in his kingdom, though he is tied and bound by formality, and is obliged to limit his remarks to subjects uncontroversial—at any rate, to the non-controversial aspect of them. His speaking is always effective. He has a compelling voice, which easily commands, and would command were he the poorest man in his kingdom. For clearness and controlling power there is no voice in the two Houses of Parliament to equal it, save one. The matter of his speeches—speeches which cannot have been prepared for him, practically impromptu speeches, have an aptness, a turn of phrase, a penetration, due to a mind in tune, and in high tune, with the life around him. He is by nature intensely human, his heart is large, and his sympathies are alive in extreme degree; but here, again, in all that affects his public life, it does no more than give an air of actuality to all that he says and all that he does. He strikes the looker-on as being in earnest, as feeling first instinctively and thinking afterward, which, after all, is the only source of logical or sound intellectual power. This difference may be noted between his utterances and those of the Prince Consort, whose mind was highly philosophical and whose sympathies were wide, and yet who, noble and gifted character as he was, does not in his speeches con-

vey the same sense of direct or spontaneous feeling as that shown by his son Edward.

The King has a marked intellectual accessibility, which is essential in a modern constitutional ruler. There is generally a tendency toward rigidity and even reaction in the mental attitude of royalties, and those placed in positions beyond which there is no higher summit: but in him is neither rigidity nor reaction. The whole practice of ceremony and convention, the great distance from the fighting arena, the parade-ground display, as it were, all serve to make the mind inelastic, to throw it back upon tradition and caution, on the rubric of precedent, which makes for ease but also makes for stagnation. King Edward's interests have, however, brought him into intimate touch with all sides of life, and his views are singularly tolerant and catholic. The movement of his mind is democratic, and his respect for custom and tradition is largely based upon a sense of the picturesque and an unusual sense of order—a taste for the historical sequence of things. To him, history is not so much a matter of symbols and lessons, which can be applied to point the immediate moral and to adorn the present tale, as it is an orderly procession of events, set forth in proper proportion and having significance to-day more as memorials than as guides, more as drama than as the spring of philosophy and preaching.

It has been said by some critical observer of affairs in this country that Mr. Gladstone knew mankind, but that Disraeli knew men; and the quick perception of the King, his deft manipulation of opportunity, his quickness in catching the approaching footfall of events are all evidences of this knowledge of men. He occupies himself less with mankind, is less concerned with human philosophy in its universal activities and its underlying laws, than with the immediate deeds and motives of men and peoples. Within this sphere he is easily the most facile of all public men of contemporary

history. In the words of the transatlantic phrase, "he keeps his ear to the ground;" but he does more, for he catches the note of progress, the national inflection of hope or purpose, the indefinite but pervasive tendency, and he acts upon it promptly. This was the source of the *entente cordiale*. This faculty of stepping forward at the head of the movement of public thought is what makes him so valuable as an international mediator and the negotiator of "invisible securities," if I may coin the phrase. He starts, too, with prejudice in his favor; he is in himself *persona grata* at all courts and in all countries. The fact that he has no legislative power, that his ministers may not represent his own opinions, that his Parliament may move in a direction contrary to his own convictions, that his diplomatic actions and words are not binding, naturally gives his influence wide scope. He negotiates with peoples, not with Governments; therefore, his achievements are in the highest and truest sense national, are as much a result of popular approval as the election of President Roosevelt is the direct pronouncement of the will of the masses. He hands over to the nation the results of his ambassage and negotiations, but he gets a large commission on his enterprise in the increase of prestige and the growing confidence of the country which he governs. He is a man of business in the best sense, and he long ago recognized that he ruled a nation of men who have more respect for businesslike qualities than for attributes of personal charm. To carry, as he does, a really acute imagination safely concealed beneath a smooth business capacity and an outer convention of unruffled dignity is quite worthy of a quarter century's reputation, but it does not belong to the general estimate of that reputation. His activity equals that of the German Emperor, but it is an activity projected from a battery of different calibre and inspired by different force, and it is less hampered by administrative responsibility. At once "the champion of our high lineage," the recorder of

ancient rights, and a democrat in his sympathies with modern movement and the "inevitable trend," he poses neither as patrician, patriarch nor patriot. He walks with quiet footsteps into the good-will of the foreign chancelleries of public opinion, and brings home something to the national treasury.

The Transvaal, Ireland, France have been the most conspicuous and most difficult objects of his diplomatic purpose, and the results are equally conspicuous. Peace with honor can be more fitly applied to all his endeavors than to those of any minister of the past generation. Peace came sooner in the Transvaal because of him; it is not unlikely that it will last because of him. In Ireland there is less personal hostility to Englishmen, less misunderstanding of England, because of him, and if to win the hearts of Connemara is not to turn Irish Nationalists from their political purpose, it goes some distance in stripping political warfare of its acerbity and harshness. The work of diplomacy well begun in Ireland—and it is diplomacy, so alien is the south of Ireland to English rule—may well bring still more useful results, may, indeed, make Irishmen and Ireland and Irish questions better understood by Englishmen, whose judgments have been narrowed by too much dwelling on the challenge to union, thrown down in the "Eighties." If Ireland is not free from traditional wrath, the long influence of tribal vendetta, and the red legends of history, England is not free from blindness of heart, vain-glory, and even hypocrisy; but the King of England has none of these things, is free from them all, was free from them all in darker, sadder days than these.

His Majesty, like Queen Victoria, has a wide knowledge of European affairs; he has got that knowledge in experience—the only school which can effectively teach. His familiarity with the language, the domestic customs and the national idiosyncrasies of every great country of the world, and his accurate estimate of the difficulties that perplex foreign sovereigns and

their Governments, together with a greater freedom to come and go, and the habit of coming and going greater than his royal emulators on other thrones possess, give him extraordinary advantage in the rivalries of *rapprochements* of nations. The friend of peace, with a rare sense of what is fitting and what is in national good taste, with the keenest anxiety to spare the sensibilities of all, by a diplomatic intervention at home he prevents or allays many a bad impression abroad. His diplomacy is not confined to visits to other countries; it is a daily habit at home, and more than one actor-manager could tell of a suggestion from Marlborough House, and, in latter days, from Buckingham Palace, which postponed the presentation of a play or a song or a monologue internationally inopportune. This is the kind of thing which a Government never could do, which the King himself as king has no power to achieve, but which, as the head of the people, he can accomplish by a request as imperative in its effect as a command, by an intervention which none of his subjects resents. This sort of thing, this obedience to the will of the head of the clan, is not possible in an absolute monarchy or in a republic. Because no law, no real power of statute or the sword, no penalty, lies behind the unwritten command of the King, it has the more genuine obedience. In a way it is patriarchal, in a way it is the will of the people voluntarily giving itself up to guidance and control by the head of the family; but yielding to the guidance in the first place because it sees behind it common sense, a delicate and acceptable personal legislation and a quiet diplomacy. The closeness of touch between the English monarchy and the people, its dignity and its representative character, give it a national character only properly understood by foreigners themselves. Under King Edward's rule it is likely to become still more representative, in touch as he is with every phase of national and international life. Its influence will, no doubt, grow wider and wider

as his frank diplomacy increases in power at home and abroad. While other European nations less fortunately developed, politically and constitutionally, labor under the burdens of their disabilities, England is able to strengthen the hands of its Sover-

eign in one of the high duties of his place—a diplomacy which seeks no national benefit at another nation's expense, but a better understanding between nations which will make for a common benefit and for the peace of the world.



## TYPES

AURELIA, with the meek blue eyes,  
And pretty curls of pale-gold hair,  
Why is it that your memory lies  
Upon my spirit like a prayer?  
Modest you seemed as cloistered nun  
Or violet, shrinking from the sun—  
You were in truth, a flirt, the worst  
That e'er the peace of mankind cursed.

Jacinta, rose-brown, black-haired, tall,  
With flashing glance and upheld head,  
Why did you make me think of all  
The wicked ones of whom I've read—  
Wild Cleopatra, Helen bold  
Of Troy, and others of like mold?  
And yet, I know, who knew you best,  
A child's pure heart throbbed in your breast!

MADLINE BRIDGES.



## AN AUTHORITY

JOSH MEDDERS (*didactically*)—When it comes to classic music—

ABNER APPLIEDRY (*skeptically*)—Hoh! What do you know about classic music?

JOSH MEDDERS—I know *all* about it, by gosh! Wasn't I run over and durned near killed by a circus band-wagon, over to Allegash, last Summer?



PROPRIETOR—What kind of a room do you want?  
GUEST—High, and low.



# RECLAMATION WORK

FROM THE MEMOIRS OF CONSTANTINE DIX

By Barry Pain

AT one time the wives and families of men who were serving their sentences in prison frequently suffered great privation. In sheer desperation they would often be themselves driven to dishonest courses to procure the bare means of existence, and in this way the punishment of crime was in reality the cause of its multiplication. To a lesser extent this evil still prevails, though I should be doing less than justice did I not mention the splendid efforts of several organizations, and notably of the Church Army, to deal with it. I sometimes did what I could in this direction myself.

When Alfred Gimbrell, a criminal of feeble type and low intelligence, got what he termed a tray of moons, he had a message conveyed to me that he would take it very kind if I would keep an eye on the missus and the kids. He had a large family, and was an affectionate husband and father. I provided them with a small sum of money for their immediate necessities, and set about finding work for the woman. In this I had no difficulty. It was in the height of the London season, and many firms were giving temporary employment to extra hands. Moreover, Mrs. Gimbrell was a really clever woman with her needle. I told the plain facts of the case to Messrs. Pawling & Ramsworthy, of Oxford street, and they agreed to take her on if I would guarantee the value of the materials entrusted to her. To this I at once consented; I have done the same thing in several cases, and I have never

once lost a penny by it. Five of the children were at school, the eldest girl helped her mother, and the eldest boy sold newspapers. From time to time, when I was in the neighborhood, I looked in to see how they were getting on. To my mind, they seemed to be doing better without Alfred than with him.

Mrs. Gimbrell was touchingly grateful.

"If ever Alf goes crooked again," she said, "after all you've done, Mr. Dix, he ought to be took out and shot, though it's his own wife that says it."

"Ah, Mrs. Gimbrell," I said, "why did you not use your influence to check him before he got into this trouble? Time after time, you must have known that the money he brought you was not made honestly."

"Well, what was I to do? After all, it's for 'im to look after me; it's not for me to look after 'im. It's not for a married woman to set and slave while the man spends the money. He ain't bad, many ways. He don't drink—leastways, not like some. And fond of 'is children? Oh, not 'arf! Why, 'e'd cut 'is 'and off at the root for 'em. But then it seems like as if he couldn't work. He's one of them that gets soon tired—that's where it is, and the money 'ad got to come from somewhere."

"And now you see where it leads to."

"Yes, we'll 'ave a change now. That I'm determined on. If you could only speak to 'im! He's out Saturday morning, and then it's just the few weeks before we all goes down to the

hop-picking. That always suits 'im—looks a better man every time when 'e comes back. If 'e'd keep straight for them few weeks, there might be a chance."

"I will do what I can. On Sunday afternoon I shall be giving a short address in Hyde Park. Bring him to hear me, and I will see that what I say is specially suited to his case. Yes, I know that it's a long way, but the walk will do you both good. And when the address is over I will have a few words with him privately."

She thanked me again, and I left.

I had been on the verge of telling her to send him up to my house in Lanyon street, Bloomsbury, on Saturday night. But I remembered that Saturday would be the first of August, and I had already arranged for my evening on the first of August.

I proceed with some regret to tell what my arrangements were. I know very well that if these memoirs are ever published, I shall be then far beyond the reach of men's contempt. But I seem already to feel the sting of that word, hypocrite, though it has never at this moment of writing been applied to me. The finest temperance sermon I ever heard was preached by a clergyman who was, as was discovered subsequently, himself a dipsomaniac. I knew the man, and he was no hypocrite. I am as convinced of my ability to reclaim others as of the utter hopelessness of any attempt to reclaim myself. I am a good preacher, but I am a very good thief. Theft happens to be the thing that I do best. I have studied it, and I am fond of it. It gives me a great satisfaction to note the blunders that lead less intelligent criminals to their destruction and the way in which I avoid those blunders. Again, though I have a house at a fairly high rental in Bloomsbury and a smaller house at Brighton, and paid close on five hundred pounds for my motor-car, and live very comfortably, a certain portion of my income is set aside for my work among the criminals and the suffering of the East End of London.

On the first of July—one month before—I happened to be in the bank in the afternoon, and, after finishing my business, I was chatting about the political situation with the cashier, to whom I am well known. I am well known as a philanthropist to quite a number of respectable people. The manager of Messrs. Pawling & Ramsworthy always has a tolerant smile for me, when I tell him of any of my cases, and will help me, if he can do so without risk to himself. I am sure the last time that Ikey got into trouble Inspector Measor was almost apologetic about it, though at the same time he told me that he was afraid I should find Ikey a hopeless case. I am known as a thief to myself alone.

As the cashier was talking, a little old woman stepped up to the counter, and I stood aside for her. She was dressed very neatly in a bygone fashion, and gave one the idea of a particular and prim person. As soon as the cashier saw her, he produced a canvas bag, and, as she handed in her cheque, pushed the bag across to her.

"Thank you, sir. I wish you good afternoon," she said. She put the money in a locked leather bag she was carrying, and went out. I saw the cheque upside down for the fraction of a second, as the cashier took it to his desk—out of sight—to obliterate the signature. It was a cheque for fifty pounds, payable to order, but the word "bearer" had been substituted and initialed. It was signed Hannah Gosforth in a small and particularly neat handwriting.

"You had it all ready for her," I said. "How did you know what she wanted?"

"It's the same on the first of every month—or the second, if the first happens to be a Sunday. She has banked here for the last thirty years, though she lives at Surbiton; and, unless she's ill or away on a holiday, she always comes herself for it. Never counts it, either; says that if she thought I were dishonest or couldn't count, she'd bank somewhere else. Queer customer."

There is a type of woman that always

gets an order cheque-book for safety, and always alters "order" to "bearer" for convenience. She carries fifty pounds in gold through a crowded thoroughfare in a silly hand-bag at a time when a man of observation might be expecting her, and thinks herself secure because the bag has a penny-farthing lock on it. I know that type. I know the kind of cash-box which it uses and trusts. I know its reading-lamp, and its lavender sachets, and its bright keys, and its religious observances. There was a time, back in my boyhood, when I knew some of its charm; and I know now all its futility.

Fifty pounds is not a large sum, perhaps, to a rich man. But I felt that it would be worth my while to take it, especially as the trouble attending it promised to be very slight. I could not go to Surbiton that day, as I had promised to attend a meeting in Clerkenwell in the evening; besides, I should have an equally good opportunity in a month's time. I was anxious to make my visit on the first of the month, because it struck me that a woman who always drew fifty on the first, would be extremely likely to pay the house-books of the previous month on the second, and her domestic servants on the third.

The first of August was a Saturday, and therefore the second was a Sunday—a day on which I felt assured that Miss Hannah Gosforth would neither make nor receive payments. Why, then, did I not postpone my visit to the Sunday? Simply because I happen to share Miss Gosforth's views as to the observance of Sunday. I give up the whole of Sunday to what I think to be the higher branch of my work, and frequently I have given as many as six addresses in the one day. I should not dream of making money on Sunday. And I have a conviction—the infidel will call it stupid fatalism—that if I ever break my rule the last calamity will follow.

So on Saturday afternoon I put a packet of sandwiches in one side-pocket of the jacket of a blue serge suit and a flask of cold, weak tea, flavored with

lemon, in the other side-pocket. I have no objection to drinking intoxicating liquors when I wish to become intoxicated, as from time to time occurs. But for ordinary drinking I have found cold tea to be the most useful. It should be very weak—strong tea affects the nerves, and my nerves are important—and the flavor of lemon blends pleasantly. In the breast-pocket of the same jacket, I carried a letter to Miss Hannah Gosforth. Inside was the circular of a new and pushing boot-making company which had been left in my own letter-box that morning. On the envelope was a particularly illegible address, written by myself. I have no false modesty about it. In these memoirs I state facts only, and you can draw your own conclusions. It is a fact that I am a master in the art of writing partially illegible addresses. You could just make out the name of Miss Gosforth, and you could decipher the word "street." The word Surbiton was written in a larger hand, and was clear enough for anybody. But the number and name of the street were quite illegible. With this I had very little doubt that I should be able to discover Miss Gosforth's place of residence.

When I arrived at Surbiton I went into the first shop of any importance that I came across, and showed the letter.

"A friend," I said, "asked me to deliver this while I was in Surbiton, and I can't make head or tail of the address. It's for a Miss Gosforth. I wonder if you could help me?"

The man to whom I was speaking had approached with the usual obsequious smile. He now looked distinctly sulky.

"No," he said, "I can't help you. Miss Gosforth don't deal here."

It was clear to me that Miss Gosforth had at one time dealt there and had subsequently transferred her custom; also, that the man knew her address perfectly well and had not the remotest intention of giving it, so I thanked him and went out. I then tried a postman, with the same story.

"Yes," he said, "I know Miss Han-nah Gosforth well enough, but that address is wrong. It's not a street, it's a road—Marley Road. Ivy Cottage, Marley Road, that's where she lives, and it's pretty well the last house."

I gave the man a shilling, and a few minutes later was ringing the bell at Ivy Cottage. I handed my letter to the servant, and went off. I had thus made my observations of the place under circumstances unlikely to cause suspicion.

Ivy Cottage was a small detached house with a scrap of garden between it and the road and a larger garden behind. I had seen through the window the old lady's methodical writing-table. It was of the kind known as an Oxford table, and I had very little doubt that she kept her useless cash-box in one of the bottom drawers of that table, locked it with an equally useless key, and slept with a conviction that she had done all that a mortal woman could do to defend her property, and might leave the rest to Providence. Any of the windows on the ground floor could be opened with ease, but to prevent observation from the road, I decided to take one of the windows at the back.

I wandered away into the country, finished my sandwiches and tea, and made notes for my addresses on the following day. It was a beautifully warm and peaceful evening, with that strange calm in it that I have so often noticed in the country on the eve of Sunday, as though Nature, like man, now prepared for a while to rest.

I was back at Ivy Cottage by half-past ten. By that time, I felt certain that the old lady and her household would be in bed and asleep, and I knew that I could do what I had to do quietly and very quickly.

In the garden behind the house, I found a man standing with his back to me, spreading with some care a sheet of brown paper with treacle.

I do not mean that under the doubtful light of the stars I could detect that the paper was brown or that it was treacle which was being used.

That was a matter of conjecture. But I saw enough to be sure that here was a man on the point of effecting a burglarious entrance into Miss Gosforth's house. The treacle-spread sheet of stiff paper is applied to a pane of the window, and the glass can then generally be broken and removed without noise. The broken pieces adhere to the paper. The man gets his arm through the hole, feels for any electric alarm-wires and cuts them, and then puts back the catch and opens the window. I have used this trick myself, but I seldom employ it now. The treacle must be of just the right consistency, and the whole thing must be managed with great skill, or the trick fails and a noise is made which awakens the people in the house. It is not certain enough for me.

Intentionally, I took a step on the gravel. It was enough. The man turned sharply, saw me, and then dropped his bottle and the paper, and made a bolt for the road. I ran after him.

Twenty yards down the road, I had almost overhauled my man, when he turned sharp around, and his hand went to his side-pocket.

"Stop that, Alfred Gimbrell," I said; "do you want to kill the man who saved your wife and children?"

He had not recognized me, though I had never had any doubt about him. He used the extremely filthy and blasphemous expression which was habitual with him when he wished to indicate great surprise and astonishment, and then pulled out his revolver and handed it to me.

"There yer are," he said. "Put my lights out. I deserve it."

"You are talking foolishly, Gimbrell," I said. "I shall take this weapon because you are not to be trusted with it. But it was not to kill you that I came to Surbiton to-night. It was to save you from the consequences of your own folly and wickedness."

"I suppose, Mr. Dix, it's no good astin' you how you knew I was on this lay."

I answered him with another question: "Where did you buy this revolver?" I had noticed that it was new and had not been used.

He thought it over for a moment. "I see," he said. "And so you followed me on from there. Why, you'd make a 'tec. I never knew you was near me. Oh, blast it! What's the good?"

"Don't swear, Gimbrell. Bad language, as I have told you before, is something worse than useless. Come along quietly with me, and tell me how you came to be doing this when you have only been for a few hours out of prison?"

We walked away from the town, and he talked as we went.

"If you arst me how I knew of it, I had it from a friend, who got it from a pal of his that knows the servant. My friend was to have took half what I got."

"Ah, Gimbrell, that was no true friend."

"And so I told him myself. Two quid I wouldn't have stuck at. But what right had he got to half, with me taking all the risks?"

"No true friend would have tempted you back to your old way of life at all. I tell you, Gimbrell, you'll have to quit it."

"That's what I was wanting to do. But yer see how it was. I come 'ome and finds the missus very 'aughty and teachin' of my own kids to look on me as if I was a leper. I know she had some money, but there wasn't as much as the price of a pot for me. I could go out and see if I couldn't find a job of work, she said. Nice words those are to use to any man! Then I come on my friend, and he got talking. You see, you must have a bit of something in your pocket to be going on with while you're looking for some suitable occupation. This was to have been the last time. And it was a soft thing—fifty golden sovereigns, and all as easy as telling lies. Mind you, I wasn't going to be took again. I'd have outed the copper and myself, too. I wouldn't go till my friend gave me the

money to get this revolver. And that's the kind of man as my missus turns round on and says, 'Oh, cawn't you go and get yerself a job of work?' Just like that! And I assure you, Mr. Dix, that's a woman I've never so much as raised my 'and against. What I warnt to know is if I'm expected to stand such treatment as that, while——"

"Never mind that. Your wife has worked hard and well to keep the home together while you were in prison. You should try to win back her respect."

"She'd have respected me fast enough if I'd come 'ome to-night with them quids in my pocket."

"There you are mistaken. While you have been away she has learned to look at things very differently."

"So she told me—going on as if I wasn't good enough for her."

His wife had evidently been very tactless. In many ways I felt sorry for the man. I determined to see if I could not break through his miserable conceit and his utter recklessness, and touch his heart. With the utmost fervor and sincerity I threw myself into the work. I spoke to him of his children. I said much which need not be repeated here. And in the end I succeeded. I had the man weeping and penitent, and I had his most solemn promise that he would lead a new life in future. Then I gave him a few shillings to pay his fare back and get himself some supper, and sent him off.

In Gimbrell's flight from the house and my pursuit of him a certain amount of noise must have been made. It would not have surprised me if I had found the house lighted up. But it was all in darkness, and not a sound was to be heard. I went around to the back and found the sheet of brown paper and the bottle that Gimbrell had dropped. I had not intended to use anything of the kind, but as it was there and all prepared, I fitted the sheet to a pane of glass. It worked very well.

I met with no incidents of interest while I was in the house. I was there



for only a few minutes. The cash-box was not in the drawers of the table, but in a little locked cupboard in the sideboard. It was much as I expected. It had a triple lock, and looked very substantial. The bottom of it was a separate piece fastened in with four screws. It was made in Germany, and, if these lines should ever come to the eye of its maker, I hope that he will let me take this opportunity of saying that I am obliged to him. It contained £40 6s. 3d. It was less than I had expected, but I think I made up the difference with a pair of salt-cellars, genuine Queen Anne

and very interesting. I intended these for my own use. I left Gimbrell's revolver behind me. I never carry anything of that kind. The police were very pleased at finding it, but they did not succeed in tracing the purchaser of it.

Gimbrell, who heard of the old lady's loss, was much impressed with the coincidences that the case presented.

"Why," he said, "if I'd only gone a bit later, and you 'adn't been following me, that other bloke and me might 'ave met in the 'ouse. It would 'ave made me angry, but I couldn't 'ave 'elped laughing."



## UNDER WHICH KING BENZONIAN?

LOVE lifts on white wings to the gates  
 Of Paradise and enters in;  
 Lust has for wings two leaden weights  
 That sink into the lake of sin.  
 Lust squats, toad-like, his loathsome cell—  
 Love seeks the light, on, on, above;  
 Love is of God, as God is love,  
 But lust is Lucifer in hell.

JOAQUIN MILLER.



## THE WAY IT WAS

"I DON'T, as a general rule, care a tinker's anathema for such things," said the Old Codger, in the midst of his perusal of the village newspaper. "These 'ere commencement exercises have always seemed monotonously alike to me. But this article in the *Weekly Plaindealer* says that at the doin's last Friday night, the graduates sat in a semicircle on the stage, ten young girls dressed in white, each holding a large bunch of carnations and one young man. According to that, I sh'u'd presume I missed a real interesting sight by not being present on that occasion."

## AFTER RAVENHOE

By Virginia Woodward Cloud

'T WAS many a yellowing year ago that the King rode down from Ravenhoe.

And we met midway—I mind it yet, God wot, the flanks of my steed were wet!—  
He hailed from the rim of a cliff's incline; the sky was red as the King's own wine;  
He waved his plume and he drew his rein—there were flecks of foam on his charger's mane.

"Ho, lad! and halt! Come not more nigh!"—Oh, glad was his voice and proud his eye!

"'Tis victory over the Ravenhoses and I wave to the Queen in her garden-close!  
For if 'twere victory—thus said she—I should stay me here for her first to see;  
I should stand me here against the sky, should there be no mightier King than I!"

Battle and blood they lay behind. Like a lad he laughed at the silver wind.  
Battered his helm and bent his spear, and I heard his horsemen thundering near;  
He stood in the stirrup brave and tall, and waved to the green o'er a distant wall;  
"Ho, lad! 'Tis a gleam of white I see!" . . . "Sire, white are the boughs of her young plum tree . . ."

"'Tis her silken scarf, and I must not lag!" . . . "Hold, Sire! . . . 'Tis the wind in the tower flag!"

"Nay! 'tis her hand—she awaits me there!" . . . "Sire, blossoms are white as her hand is fair . . ."

Quoth he: "Then I fly where that blossom blows—the whitest one in her garden-close!"

Together we galloped us side by side, I prest to the King, the King toward his bride.

Together we galloped, we galloped apace, till he panted: "Speak, boy! How looked her sweet face?"

The star of my kingdom 'tis, I ween!" . . . "Sire, hers was the smile of a crowned queen."

"Aye, crowned by this warrior's hand of mine!" . . . "Is there no hand, Sire, which can crown save thine?"

His plume he raised to the reddened sky: "Love only is King that is greater than I!"

"Sire, . . . thou hast spoken the word but now. Love is the King that is greater than thou."

Leaped we down at the postern gate—silent the horn. Oh, the King was late!  
Sprang to the garden-close . . . Alack! the white boughs, waving,  
warned him back.

Stair and terrace and echoing floor—waited in silence each open door;  
Strode he the tangled rushes strown. She had waited long who waited  
alone . . .

Red as blood was her mullioned pane, white was she as bloom after rain;  
Aye, white in state the Queen did lie, and she wore Death's crown right royally.  
Thunder of battle and triumph's stir could not trouble the smile of her.

Prone to the earth the King fell blind . . .

The horns of his horsemen smote the wind.

(Battle and glory lay behind . . .)

The trumpets of horsemen clove the air . . .

(Flower of victory perished there . . .)

Low at her feet he smote his brow . . .

"Sire, . . . thou didst speak the word but now . . . Love is the King that  
is greater than thou!"



## POSITIVE PROOF

"WIGGIN'S wife is a dead-game sport, isn't she?"

"Well, I should say so. He tells me he learned to smoke on his wedding  
trip."



## NO FAIRY TALE

"WILL you marry me?" he asked.

"No," she replied.

And they lived happily ever afterward.



LITTLE BOY BLUE prepared to blow his horn.  
"I don't care anything about the sheep in the meadow or the cows in the  
corn," he observed, "but with an eight-thousand dollar machine I simply can-  
not afford to run over any more children."

So saying, he turned off the spark.

# THE BISHOP'S SON

By Kathryn Jarboe

TO quote Mrs. Lee's own flippant language, she was a red-haired Western widow of twenty-three. She had forsaken the broad prairies and plains of Colorado for the narrow streets of New York because in Colorado she could find no agreeable ways of spending even a fraction of the fortune left her by Peter Lee, late owner of many millions and many mines. Her house in New York asserted rather broadly that she had discovered some ways of disposing of this income. All the rooms were artistically simple, and that, from a financial point of view, is very different from simply artistic. The entire second floor had been thrown into one large apartment. As Mrs. Lee explained, some concession had to be made to Colorado lungs—they needed at least one room in the house where they could expand. The walls and ceilings here, the rugs and draperies, were green—a green neither dull nor dark, and not so faint that it could be mistaken for any other color. To the decorator, Mrs. Lee had said that she herself would furnish the necessary chromatic variation. The artist, his mind absorbed in textile fabrics and commercial pigments, did not understand the personal application of his patroness's remark. Assuming that she referred to tapestries or paintings, he devoted himself to the construction of an artistic background. When he had finished his labors, Mrs. Lee found the room adorable, perfect, exactly as she wanted it, absolutely right. As a background for her own radiant self, it was just as it should have been—perfect.

The windows at the back were of

thick green glass, shading darker and lighter, apparently according to the caprice of the material. Hedging one corner of the room was a tall screen of the same glass, but across the centre of this floated a round, silvery moonfish, a sentient bit of light in a deep, green pool. High palms shaded the front windows, and on every table and cabinet—scattered about even on the floor—were pots of maidenhair and low, flat bowls of violets.

On every table and cabinet, too, were photographs of Mrs. Lee's New York friends, encased in silver frames. For Mr. Lee's legal advisers had received Mr. Lee's widow with deferential courtesy; the wives of these legal advisers had hastened to greet the owner of Mr. Lee's millions, and, inasmuch as the Colorado mine-owner had demanded legal aid only from men who were on the topmost rung of the ladder, it is needless to say that from the drawing-rooms of these women the rich widow found easy stepping-stones to other houses equally exclusive. Doors opened to the right and to the left, and the owners of the doors bowed before her almost as obsequiously as the flunkies who guarded them. Already her days at home were functions for the smartest of the smart set. Her appearance at the opera was accorded more attention than Caruso's sweetest note. Her goings and her comings, her sayings and her doings, formed the cream of society's small talk.

The Winter—society's Winter—had melted quite away, and Spring—in the South—was calling society's birds of passage, when Mrs. Lee made several

discoveries that interfered with her peace of mind. The first was that she had fallen in love, desperately, completely, over head and heels, like the most ordinary school-girl. In commenting upon this fact to her Colorado confidants, she said that she was awfully glad because she did think that a woman ought to marry once for love. The second discovery was that the man whom she loved, loved her, loved her absolutely and entirely for herself, and did not care in the least for Peter Lee's money. "And it's awfully lucky," she wrote, "that Bertie hasn't sense enough, commercial sense enough, to understand the value of money, because of course Peter's money was married once for itself and I don't feel that it ought to play a prominent part in a second matrimonial alliance." To these confidants she also wrote that Bertie Dumond was an artist, that he was the only son of Bishop Dumond, and, although these facts seem simple enough, her letters to Colorado at that time invariably required extra postage. Since she wrote about nothing except Bertie, it is safe to assume that he had other good points.

But there was a third discovery that was almost coincidental with the others. Bertie's family—the bishop's family—had not received her with open arms, would not receive her with open doors. This caused her to rage internally and to express her rage externally to Bertie. He, of course, tried to persuade her that she was mistaken, that his sisters, Patricia and Angela, received no one, that they went nowhere, that they were absorbed in church work.

"You know that's rubbish," retorted Marian Lee. Bertie had spent an entire evening advancing his fruitless arguments. "They go everywhere and they receive everybody. I see them wherever I go, and I've met them a dozen times and I assure you that—that Patricia cut me openly this afternoon at Mrs. Hartlee's reception."

"But, my dear!" expostulated Bertie.

"No, no! I'll not have you 'my dear' me any more, and I tell you right

now that I'll not marry you. I'll never marry you, never, never in the world."

"But, Marian, can't you be reasonable just for a minute? Patricia——"

"No," interrupted Marian, "I don't want to hear anything more about them. Of course, you think that I'm in a temper and taking advantage of my red hair and all that, but I'm not. I'm merely firm. I've come to a conclusion, and I'll stick to it—as we say in Colorado."

She had been walking the floor with long, swinging strides that would have covered a prairie mile in a fragment of time. Now she sat down dismissing her temper and, apparently, the subject. "Do you know, I'm awfully tired of that moonfish. I think a hundred little goldfish would be prettier. I get tired of things of that sort rather easily."

The man knew that there was a suggestion of prophecy, a covert threat in her words, for Marian's remarks could rarely be accepted at their face value, but he did not stop to consider this one.

"But, Marian, do let me speak. Patricia is horribly near-sighted, and I don't believe that she saw you at all in those dismal Hartlee rooms."

"Near-sighted! Poof!" She blew his suggestion away as lightly as though it had been a bit of thistledown. "It's easy enough to know when a person doesn't see you. But when her chin goes up and her eyes go down whenever you happen to be in her range of vision, it's safe to say that the movements are not caused by near-sightedness. No. I dare say she's heard that you come here constantly, and I dare say she thinks I'm a red-haired Western adventuress, eager to marry the first apology for a man who'll take me. An adventuress!" She was again measuring off her wrath against the Dumond family in long strides. "My Aunt Susan warned me that I'd be taken for an adventuress if I came on here alone, because I am red-haired and rich and all that. But ooofff! Fancy even considering the question of marrying a man whose sisters were



fools enough to call one an adventuress!"

"But they haven't called you an adventuress. You've only just now manufactured that idea."

"Ah, but I haven't," cried Marian. She was standing in front of his chair now, her eyes blazing down on him. "I haven't manufactured it at all. I didn't want you to know the truth, though. I didn't want you to know what idiots your sisters were. But Patricia called me an adventuress. Caroline Vanderwelt told me that Patricia had taken her to task for receiving *me*, and had said that she didn't know what society was coming to when it received all sorts of Western freaks and adventuresses with open arms. Ah, now I'm glad to see that you regard the situation seriously."

She moved away, triumphing over Bertie, whose face certainly had grown serious. There was a short silence, and then Marian observed, quite into the air, as it were:

"You see, your family's impossible, don't you?"

"But, sweetheart——"

"I'm not your sweetheart and I'm not your dear Marian. I never said—definitely—that I would marry you, and I'm glad of it now, because I'd hate to break an engagement to you." She laughed dismally, but it served to cover the catch in her voice. "I'm just plain myself, and I belong to myself."

"Well, then, just plain you, if you like that better, or Marian, or Mrs. Lee, or anything that you do like, I'm not asking you to find my family possible, to marry my family. Find me possible. Find it impossible to live without me. Find it possible to marry me."

"No, I can't and I won't; so that's the end of it." Mrs. Lee's words were conclusive. Her tone was defiant, but her eyes grew dark. Bertie almost saw the veil of tears that covered them, and he did see her lips tremble.

"Oh, sweetheart, sweetheart Marian," he cried, "do be reasonable. What do we care for what Patricia

says? What do we care for any one but ourselves?"

"Ah, but I do care for what Patricia says!" Marian's hot temper dried her tears. "I care less for ourselves than for anything else in the world. I care for the world and—and"—her voice grew softer, lower—"and I care most of all for what the world says about your wife. I can never forgive Patricia, and I'll never be your wife until Patricia herself proves to her world that it doesn't dare to say a word against me. So that's the end. This is the end." She made a hopeless gesture with her hands, but her voice was firm.

From that decision Bertie could not move her. With that decision ringing in his ears, he was forced to leave her.

On the following afternoon, Mrs. Lee was again pacing up and down her long, green living-room, not in measured, definite strides, however, but in an irritable, restless fashion. For weeks, Bertie had been in the habit of coming in to help her drink her eleven-o'clock chocolate, but to-day he had failed her. Up to eleven o'clock she had not expected him—no, not in the very least. He had been coming because—well, because they were, in a way, engaged, but no man with any self-respect would come after all the horrid things she had said the night before. When the very slowest of her clocks had finished its last stroke of the hour before noon, however, she knew that she had expected him, had been sure that he would come and—well, at least she didn't want any chocolate—or anything else, for that matter. She telephoned that she was quite unable to go to a luncheon. She ordered her carriage twice, and twice countermanded the order.

At last, Suzanne appeared with a square, purple box, and Mrs. Lee seized it with such inordinate joy that the maid looked at the mistress questioningly. Suzanne knew that they were only Mr. Dumond's violets. They came every day, and why was madame——?

"Shall I arrange them, madame?" The girl held out her hand, confidently.

"No, I will put them in water, myself. Bring me the silver bowl from my table, the—the heart-shaped bowl."

But, after all, the violets meant nothing. Bertie had merely forgotten to tell the florist not to send them. Of course, he had not gone every day to order them! But they were the last she would ever have from him! Tenderly and carefully she untied the purple string—quite as though Bertie had knotted it. She raised the box and drew in a deep breath of the exquisite perfume. There was a note in the box with the blossoms. It was short. There was no greeting, no signature, but it was Bertie's writing, and she kissed it an unnecessary number of times before she read it.

"My father has promised to call upon you this afternoon. Please see him and, afterward, please let me speak to you again."

The words were few enough, but each one of them routed a regiment of the blue devils that had held Mrs. Lee in durance throughout the day.

"Poor old bishop," she laughed. "I suppose Bertie will drag him here by his white hair, shove him in, and then come and demand that I should accept the sacrifice in lieu of an apology from Patricia!"

She heard Suzanne pass through the lower hall, heard the front door open and close, and she summoned all her courage for the interview with the bishop; but the card that was brought to her did not bear Bishop Dumond's name. Instead, she read: "Miss Dumond, Miss Angela Dumond."

"Why, isn't it the bishop?" she gasped, and again the maid looked with anxious inquiry at her mistress. "Oh, of course," Mrs. Lee had already recovered her senses, "of course, Suzanne, show them up and say that I shall be here immediately."

Patricia, the elder sister, and Angela, the younger, were both many years older than Bertie, and assuredly, in appearance, they upheld the dignity of their father's position much more successfully than did that young man.

Now, they followed Suzanne up the stairs, every line of face and body expressing severe disapproval, Patricia firmly and ostentatiously, Angela somewhat nervously. They received in grim silence Suzanne's announcement that her mistress would appear presently.

"A French maid!" whispered Patricia, disdainfully, as soon as Suzanne had disappeared up the stairs. "A French woman instead of a—adecent man to open the door! That in itself is enough to arouse suspicion!"

"Is it?" fluttered Angela's answering breath. "To me it would seem quite the other way."

The sisters had seated themselves, facing the stairways leading up and down, so that they might not be taken unawares by their hostess, and they did not hear the faint whir of the automatic lift behind the green-glass screen. For just an instant, Mrs. Lee accepted the protection of this screen. Had the sisters come in peace or in war? Had Bertie forced them to come, or did they voluntarily carry a flag of truce? Assuredly she had a right to know! She was not left long in doubt.

"The room itself defines the woman!" Patricia whispered, huskily.

"Why, it's not so—so ugly," ventured Angela, faintly. "It shows a lot of money and"—even more faintly—"taste. Are you quite sure that we are right in doing this? Bertram will be so angry and—and she may be all right."

"She may be," sniffed Patricia, "and she may not. She's a woman, and the chances are she's not. I stand to Bertram in our mother's place. But I've the bishop's dignity to uphold, and I intend to do my duty, to protect both. A woman who looks like this Mrs. Lee, as she calls herself——"

It was at this moment that Mrs. Lee stepped forward. She had dressed rather elaborately for the eleven-o'clock breakfast, and was still wearing the white-lace gown that she had put on

for Bertie. Around her neck was a long chain studded with huge amethysts, and from it hung a heavy amethyst cross, this ornament being the only visible expression of her grief for the departed Peter. On her breast were Bertie's violets, in her hands the card of Bertie's sisters. Glancing indefinitely at the sisters, she again read the names.

"Miss Dumond?" she asked.

"I believe that we have met before, Mrs. Lee." Patricia's voice was provocative, but Mrs. Lee ignored it.

"Yes? I had forgotten. You wished to see me? Won't you sit down?"

"Sister—sister wants to see you," murmured Angela.

Mrs. Lee allowed her half-closed, indolent eyes to rest for an instant on the younger sister. Then she devoted her entire attention to Patricia, although in so doing she lost no quiver of the younger eyes, no quaver of the younger lips.

"I'm rather pressed for time this afternoon," Mrs. Lee began. "If there is something that I can do for you——"

Her voice sounded like the lazy purr of a cat, she leaned back in her low chair with the insolent, indolent grace of a cat, and her heavy lids and bronze lashes concealed the fires that should have warned even Miss Patricia.

"I think it best to speak plainly," began Miss Dumond, her rigid spine and icy voice expressing her resentment of Mrs. Lee's impertinent patronage. "There's no use in beating about the bush."

"No?" questioned Mrs. Lee. "I've never tried it."

"We—that is, I—have come to see you about Bertram." Miss Dumond seemed in danger of forgetting the episcopal dignity. Flippancy was a thing she abhorred. Her voice grew sharp and aggressive.

"Bertram?" questioned Mrs. Lee, absently turning her rings about on her fingers. "Oh, you mean Mr. Dumond. I—I have had the pleasure of meeting him."

Patricia brushed aside the low, pur-

ring voice. "I said that I intended to speak plainly, Mrs. Lee, and I do. Bertram is the son of a bishop, but he occasionally forgets his position and the dignity that belongs to it."

Mrs. Lee's eyebrows expressed surprise, and her voice murmured: "The dignity of the position of a bishop's son?"

"I have repeatedly warned Bertram"—Patricia ignored the interruption—"but he refuses to listen to me. Now I am taking the only course that is left open. Bertram is very dear to me. But my father's position is also dear, and I will not permit Bertram to be forced into any marriage that will injure that position."

The words were spoken definitely, clearly, and Patricia paused for an instant. Angela's frightened breath was the only sound that could be heard, and then Mrs. Lee's lazy, careless voice answered Patricia.

"But what can I do?" she asked. "I assure you, my dear Miss Dumond, that I cannot help you in the matter. I had heard vaguely, indefinitely—such things do not interest me particularly—that you were troubled because Mr. Dumond was—how do you express it?—entangled in some affair with an adventuress, but I fail to see what I can do. And—and do you not think that interference in an affair of that kind is dangerous? I have known cases where untimely interference merely forced undesirable conclusions. Let me give you a bit of advice—for your brother's sake. Will it not be very unwise to go too far in your interference?" The voice was still low and purring. There was not the faintest suggestion of jungle snarls, of tearing claws and lashing tail. But Mrs. Lee was now leaning forward, her eyes full on Miss Patricia's face. "There are some things, you know, that can never be forgiven. There are some things that even a brother cannot pardon."

Miss Patricia was gasping for breath. Such insolence she had never heard, but before she could answer it Suzanne appeared with a card.

"I am expecting Mr. Dumond," Mrs.

Lee said, as she held out her hand for the bit of pasteboard. "You will not care to meet him here? Ah, yes, but you would assuredly meet him on the stairs. The elevator is behind the glass screen. It will take you down."

As the Dumond petticoats scurried behind the screen, she added to herself: "It's rather lucky for Bertie that I *am* a lady, and that I don't always let my hair control my temper!"

But only for an instant could Mrs. Lee enjoy her triumph over Patricia. She considered that she had triumphed. Had she permitted Patricia to say anything that it would be impossible to forgive? Of course, Patricia had thought things, but a person is not responsible—that is to say, he cannot be held responsible for what he thinks, only for what he says.

At this point in her soliloquy, Mrs. Lee was obliged to move forward to greet the bishop, for it was the bishop's card that she held in her hand. Not for five minutes did she realize that the mechanism of the automatic elevator had not been explained to Patricia and Angela, and that they would be held prisoners behind the screen throughout the bishop's visit.

Now, the bishop had been told by his son that Mrs. Lee was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, the dearest, sweetest, most adorable creature that had ever lived—an angel; and the bishop had been told by his daughters that Mrs. Lee was a common, Western adventuress, absurdly artificial, a most undesirable acquaintance for Bertram, an absolutely impossible wife for Bertram. The bishop, being worldly wise, expected neither the angel portrayed by his son nor the demon depicted by his daughter, but he was wholly unprepared to see the half-shy, half-appealing, childish creature that advanced to meet him.

"I—I so appreciate this honor, Bishop Dumond," she murmured.

"I assure you, my dear Mrs. Lee, that the honor and the pleasure are mine."

It was in peace, then, that the bishop had come! Marian dexterously in-

duced him to sit down with his back to the window, reserving for herself a low chair in a tiny patch of western sunlight that framed her exquisite face in an aureole of flame, that revealed to the bishop her lovely eyes as green and unfathomable as the ocean, that seemed to lose its own life in the amethysts about her throat, in the amethyst cross that she held in her fingers. To the bishop, she looked like a jeweled saint in a stained-glass window.

For five minutes, neither went outside the monotonous commonplaces of a first conversation. Nothing that the bishop said conveyed the impression that he was studying the girl before him. Nothing that she said revealed any desire to create an impression. But now, suddenly, Mrs. Lee realized the presence of the bishop's daughters behind the green-glass screen. An execrable situation! An opportunity not to be lost! The first thought held out but a second. Of the other she took instant advantage.

The bishop was congratulating her upon her social success, for the bishop was not only worldly wise, but wise and worldly.

"A very superficial success, I'm afraid," sighed Mrs. Lee. "A woman in my position can claim nothing for herself, you know, not even a social success."

"But, my dear Mrs. Lee," began the bishop; and then, remembering Patricia's warnings, he stopped. Just what did Mrs. Lee mean by her position?

"So many people think it very fortunate to have money as I have it." She was answering the bishop's unspoken thought. "They never realize how it isolates one from all human companionship, from friendship, from—" her voice sank—"from love." Her eyes were downcast, and her slender fingers followed the facets of the amethysts in her cross. "Especially is it so when one is left alone, alone with just the money, when one is so—so young, you know. It is very hard to be cut off from everything."



The bishop was recalled to the object of his visit.

"But Bertram has told me—Bertram asked me—" He hesitated, realizing the difficulties of his position.

"Oh, Bert—Bertram, Mr. Dumond, has been very kind," murmured Mrs. Lee. "I assure you I appreciate kindness like his, but he is only a boy, and——"

The unfathomable green eyes were raised to the bishop's. Never had he been called upon to sound such depths. "Bertram has assured me that his feelings for you are infinitely more than kind."

Mrs. Lee smiled sadly, wistfully. "Bertie assures me that he adores me," she answered. "Possibly he has told you that he does, but—the adoration of a boy! What is it?"

"The adoration of a boy may be very sincere."

"Ah, sincere, yes; and it means so much to him, but what is it compared with the love of a man who has known life and seen it? What does it mean to a woman who longs for life?"

Again the bronze lashes fluttered upward, and the bishop gazed for an instant into the still, green depths that they so jealously guarded.

"Bertram has told me that he had great hopes that you would marry him." The bishop had cast all diplomacy aside. "And I—I——"

"I feel that I shall never marry," murmured Mrs. Lee, when the bishop's hesitation had grown unendurable. "My husband—" She stopped.

"Ah, yes!" The bishop for the first time realized that Mrs. Lee's bereavement was a most recent affair. "We all feel that way for a time. A life cut off like that leaves a great desolation where it has been, but time fills it, my dear; believe me, time fills it. Even I——"

"It is so good of you to appreciate how I feel," interrupted Mrs. Lee, "but it is not only that. You see, Mr. Lee placed such confidence in me. He gave unreservedly everything that he had, and, while he may have realized that I might marry again, I feel that he

relied so on my judgment to select a worthy guardian of his fortune. I would like to make some great and good use of it. I would like to marry some one who would make a great and good use of it."

"But one does not marry for reasons of that sort!" The bishop spoke sententiously. "The true marriage can be based only on love."

"But I sometimes feel," cried Mrs. Lee, "that I could truly love a man of that sort, that he would be the kind of man I could love."

Again the green eyes were raised to the bishop's, and a curious suggestion ran through the bishop's mind. Had he seen it in those aquamarine depths, or had his own brain given it birth? He did not know, but he sought a refuge from it in a platitude.

"Love comes and goes as it wills, you know. It cannot be driven, it cannot be coerced. I am sorry for Bertram. I think that his devotion and— and love for you are very sincere, but I can appreciate that he is not the sort of man that you could love."

Was the bishop accepting her ultimatum concerning Bertram somewhat too easily? Patricia could not see the light in the bishop's eyes. Patricia must hear something more definite.

"I must have some one to look up to, some one to revere. Mr. Dumond is all that is dear and sweet. But——"

"There, there, my dear!" The bishop's voice was low and full of comfort. "You must not take life so seriously. You are sorry for Bertram, but we can make it all easy for him, we——"

The bishop was holding her hand in one of his, stroking it gently with the other.

"I knew that *you* would understand me, that *you* would appreciate my feelings." There was actually a sob in Mrs. Lee's low voice. "Your words are so comforting, so *sympatica*!"

For fifteen minutes, the bishop felt called upon to explain just how and why it was so easy for him to sympathize with her—he had been so lonely in his own home since his wife's



death many years before. Bertram had always been away at school, in Paris, and his daughters—well, neither Angela nor Patricia was—*sympatica*, if he might use her sweet Italian word. He had often wondered if it would not be well for him to marry again. And now it seemed to him that—

It was here that Mrs. Lee murmured that he had so much, so very much, to offer to any woman; and it was soon after this that the bishop rose to take his leave.

"I have trespassed too much on your time," he said, holding her slim, white hand in his. "But I may come again, very soon? And you will let me help you? You will rely on me?"

And he still held her hand while she assured him that his advice would be her greatest comfort, the greatest possible comfort that she could have.

When the front door had closed upon the bishop, Mrs. Lee, passing behind the glass screen, discovered Miss Angela cowering in one corner of the dainty pink elevator, and Miss Patricia, white and still, staring somewhat defiantly from the other.

"The—the boy—" gasped Miss Angela.

"Why—why, you didn't understand the elevator?" Mrs. Lee's tone expressed surprise and contrition. "You will pardon me, I am sure."

She pressed the spring that was half concealed in the quilted satin, and, without another word from Miss Dumond or from Miss Angela Dumond they passed down out of the range of Mrs. Lee's vision, and in another moment she heard the front door close again upon angry, determined, feminine footsteps.

When Bertram Dumond appeared at Mrs. Lee's door soon after the bishop's departure, Suzanne informed him that Mrs. Lee regretted exceedingly that she could not see him then, but that she would be charmed to have him take breakfast with her the following morning at eleven.

It was some time after eleven the next day, and Bertram was smoking

a cigarette, while Mrs. Lee reclined indolently in a deep, green-leather chair. She had greeted her ex-fiancé, as she called him, with an extravagant eulogy of the bishop; she had detailed certain parts of the interview for his benefit, and she concluded her expurgated narrative with the remark:

"And while, of course, he's a duck of a bishop and all that, you needn't imagine that his visit will make me overlook Patricia's insolence. Nothing can do that save an apology from Patricia—an open apology, and I'm not sure that—that she'll be willing to apologize."

Now, Mrs. Lee had not told Bertie anything about his sisters' visit. She was not sure that she cared to have him know that she had—quite inadvertently—forced them to play the part of eavesdroppers.

"The bishop will doubtless tell your sisters," she went on, "and—and you, that I've no intention whatsoever of marrying you. No, you really must not call me Marian, and you mustn't come here any more just at present. You— But the bishop can explain it all so much better than I can."

At this moment Suzanne brought in a long, white pasteboard box. Marian opened it and, holding the card that accompanied the flowers in one hand, lifted the tissue and cotton that enveloped them.

"Why, they are orchids!" she cried. "How perfectly lovely!"

"Why, they are orchids!" scoffed Bertie, at the same moment. "I call them hideous. I don't see how you can encourage those imbeciles," he added, sulkily.

"Imbeciles!" she echoed, laughing as she read the card.

"Yes, imbeciles. Nobody but a fool sends orchids. Nobody but a degenerate ass would admire a thing like that." He was holding at arm's length one of the weird, uncanny blossoms that he had lifted from the box. "No color, no shape, no perfume, no anything to recommend it to any one but a silly jackanapes or an ambling dotard. Oh, you needn't look

at me in that way. I know *you* hate them."

"Oh, Bertie, Bertie!" Mrs. Lee was crying between her peals of laughter.

"I don't care who sent them, anyway," he sulked. "Who did? I'll wager it was an old fool, or a young one."

Marian held up the card, and the name stared at him in stern, uncompromising Roman type.

"Father!" he gasped.

"Yes," assented Mrs. Lee, innocently. "It was awfully sweet of him, wasn't it? You may read his message, too, if you like. 'Permit me to offer the most artificial flower in the world to the most natural woman I have ever met!' Charming, isn't it? But the bishop is rather inclined to combine contrasts, is he not?"

There was a short silence. Several remarks, pertinent and impertinent, occurred to Bertie, but he refrained from expressing them to his companion, and it was she who broke the silence.

"I never appreciated the great glory and dignity of your father's position until I saw him yesterday. I don't wonder that Patricia is anxious to uphold it in every way."

There was another silence which Bertie might have broken, but still he could not trust himself to speak. Perhaps it was natural enough that the bishop should—

"If I have the moonfish taken out"—Mrs. Lee's eyes were on her glass screen—"mightn't it be well to replace it with something more vivid, more gorgeous?"

"The other night you wanted to replace it with a hundred goldfish, if I remember rightly." Bertie's tone was indifferent toward the goldfish and somewhat sulky toward Mrs. Lee.

"Yes, but you see," she answered, "the other night it seemed to me that, if I had the moonfish taken out—I have been awfully fond of that moonfish, too—there'd be nothing else to do but to fill in a lot of little small things, small fishes, you know. Now, I'm merely considering the other idea."

Here Bertie remembered suddenly that, when Marian had spoken before of changing the decoration of the screen, her words had seemed to have some ulterior meaning. His eyes traveled slowly from her face to the silvery moonfish, and in their passage they crossed the purple orchids.

In an instant, he sprang to his feet. "Good heavens! Marian, you don't mean——"

Smiling a bit maliciously, she nodded an assent.

"You mean, you'd marry the bishop!"

"Marry the bishop!" It was her turn to express vehement surprise. "Bertie, you're almost sacrilegious. Of course, I wouldn't marry the bishop, but——" She stopped.

"But what?" he demanded.

"Why, I might flirt—oh, there's no connection, really between the moonfish and the bishop. I was only teasing you because you are so stupid. I don't want you to understand anything, anyway. But can't you see how dreadful it would be for the bishop—for the bishop's dignity, I mean, to—to fall in love—I mean to flirt with—to have an adventuress flirt with him? Can't you see that a bishop in love with an adventuress would be ridiculous? The very idea of such a thing would terrify most people, don't you think? And they'd do almost anything to prevent such a thing, wouldn't they?"

"But, Marian, surely you——"

"Oh, surely I'm not going to do anything more than I have done. And surely, too, I'm not going to explain anything more than I have explained. I'll tell you one thing, though. It's an awfully good play sometimes to force your opponent's hand by——"

Here Suzanne appeared with a note, and Mrs. Lee, reading it, hurriedly finished her sentence:

"By apparently—throwing away a big trump. It's evidently a successful play. Listen to this:

"MY DEAR MRS. LEE: Will you not come in for a cup of tea on Friday next? I shall hope to have the pleasure of seeing you

before that, but I am so anxious to have Bertram's friends meet you.

"Most cordially yours,

"PATRICIA DUMOND.

"It's rather unfortunate that she's too old for a maid of honor, isn't it?"

"But, sweetheart!" ejaculated Bertie.

"Yes," assented Marian. Her voice was sweet, her arms were about his neck. But before her lips met his she said, somewhat enigmatically, it seemed to Bertie:

"I'm so thankful that she cared more for the bishop's dignity than she did for the bishop's son."



## A CHARACTER SKETCH

SHE'S a native of Manhattan, knows a pile of Greek and Latin,  
And her various accomplishments are myriad.  
Words alone could scarce express them, so in characters I'll dress them,  
If you'll bear with me in patience for a .

She has written books a-plenty, though she's scarcely two-and-XX,  
As a literary light she's bound to flash;  
Few her = are at fiction, such her brilliancy of diction,  
And her style is full of piquancy and —.

She will stand up in the middle of an audience and fiddle  
With as perfect nonchalance as did old Nero;  
And her hearers always show forth with their hands and feet, &c.,  
That the atmosphere is far this side of o.

At a card game she's a corker, this young thoroughbred New Yorker,  
And her specialty's the little ivory disk;  
With a smile serene and sunny she'll be raking in your money  
If the same you are so reckless \*.

To observe her !! on the stock and bond ' ''  
Makes one feel he would be perfectly content  
Just to marry this divinity and spend throughout ∞  
The income on her pile at 4%.

Though her talents are so varied, this fair creature's still unmarried;  
You would think some chap the chance would try to collar;  
Yet, with learning beyond ?, perfect health and sound digestion,  
She hasn't got a solitary \$.

FREDERICK H. PIERSON, JR.



TEACHER—Remember, children, always build your house on a rock.  
BRIGHT BOY—Well, papa built a Summer hotel on the sand, and made  
a fortune out of it.

# CONCERNING TOMLINS

By John Harwood Bacon

“WHO is ‘the child’?” As Wilson had been “doing police” for nearly five months, he felt privileged to treat a new reporter’s advent with a measure of patronage.

“My, what a pretty boy!” gushed Miss Eldredge, at the next desk. Miss Eldredge had been on the *Times* for over eleven years, but was still as coy as on the day of her first assignment.

“Hope he’ll get my run, and I’ll be given hotels,” muttered Wilson. “I’m getting tired of all-night work.”

Miss Eldredge gave another look.

“How pink and clean he looks! I’ll have to take him under my wing.” She redirected attention to the anecdote for her “What She Sees and Hears” column, a Sunday feature which an afternoon paper had burlesqued under the suggestive caption, “What He Smokes and Dreams.”

The newcomer’s arrival was a matter of no general interest. As the reporters loitered in, one by one, each went straight to his desk and became absorbed in that section of the morning’s news which he himself had written the night before, giving no heed to the boy standing uneasily beside the city editor.

The *Times* staff was constantly changing. New men were taken on, old men dropped. Oftentimes a youngster would “fall down” on an important assignment, and another would be recruited in his place. Occasionally, an old-timer would select an inopportune occasion for a celebration, and, in consequence, find his desk allotted to another, on his remorseful and unshaven reappearance.

Frequently, a dismantled derelict would drift into the office and receive a spare job at the copy-desk—a favor which usually terminated within a fortnight. At rare intervals, a “cyclone” would strike the shop, and the entire staff would find itself reorganized, some men unexpectedly advanced and others unceremoniously dismissed. A new reporter, therefore, was of far less interest than a study of the late edition for the purpose of finding “how much of that story of mine was hacked to pieces by that carpenter of a city editor.”

It was nearly half-past one, the hour for afternoon assignments.

“Wilson!”

Sharply, almost surlily, came the summons from the city editor’s desk.

“Ten to one, I go up,” whispered Wilson, jubilantly. Being on duty long after the other reporters had finished work, he was not due at the office until three o’clock. His summons at that hour could therefore have but one meaning; the new man was to be given “police.”

“This is Mr. Tomlins, Wilson,” was the editor’s curt introduction. “He’s to have your run, and you’re to be tried on ‘marine.’ Take him around this afternoon and introduce him, and Butler will put you on to the ropes of your new run to-morrow. No special assignments to-day; only, look out for a follow-up story on that State-street robbery.” Follow-up stories were Mr. Edwards’s hobby.

“Come along, Tomlins,” said Wilson, somewhat ungraciously. He was disappointed at getting nothing better than “marine,” which permitted short-

er hours, but demanded more "trotting around."

The new man followed obediently. He was a timid-looking little chap, with cheeks whose pinkness made him look absurdly youthful, and curly hair which obstinately resisted a palpable effort to part it on the side.

"Just come?" asked Wilson, as they started below in the elevator.

"An hour ago," answered the new man, with a smile. "I didn't want to lose any time."

"Pretty much of a kid," was Wilson's mental verdict. "Ever do newspaper work before?" he demanded.

"Not very much. I've been running a little paper in Kaloosa, but"—with modest candor—"I couldn't make it pay."

So he had been an editor—even though an unsuccessful one! Wilson, whose apprenticeship had been served as a mere helper on a country sheet, became more conciliatory.

"We'll go to the station first. Most of the tips on this run—accidents and that sort of thing—come from there. Then we'll stop in at the jail and the morgue."

"If you'll explain everything to me just as fully as you can," ventured the little man, "I'll consider it a big favor. You see, I'm awfully green about work on a city paper, and—and, naturally, I'm anxious to succeed."

There was an honest little ring in the appeal, which quite disarmed Wilson. The impulse to lord it over this novice vanished in a twinkling.

"There's nothing much to learn," he said, encouragingly. "Simply routine, after you get used to things."

"It'll probably take me some days to get my bearings," suggested Tomlins.

So it did; but, on the whole, his start was satisfactory. He learned to scan the police blotter and the morgue records, and gradually to distinguish between news worth printing in detail and that suitable only for "city briefs." He learned to drop work instantly, and rush to the fire-alarm list whenever the office indicator sounded; and he learned

to utilize the friendliness of a plain-clothes man and the good-nature of a desk sergeant. Moreover, he found that he had much to unlearn; in fact, points to be remembered were scarcely more numerous than those to be forgotten.

"Don't you see that 'at' Eighth and Cedar streets tells the same story as 'at the corner of' those streets?" demanded a seemingly furious city editor. "And, for heaven's sake, don't let me have to tell you again that the *Times's* style requires 'Mr.' or else initials after a minister's title. You may say 'Rev. Smith' in Kaloosa, but it won't go in this office."

Shamefacedly, Tomlins returned to his type-writer, while the city editor remarked to Blake, his assistant, that "for such a kid" the new man was doing fairly well.

Getting acquainted with the other men on the staff was rather slow work, the average term of police reporters being scarcely long enough to warrant immediate friendships. But gradually the name of Tomlins—Tommy Tomlins, it was—became familiar, and its curly-headed owner was accepted on a basis of newspaper camaraderie.

For the first few nights, the new reporter accompanied Wilson to Biersach's, the "place" where, after midnight, every member of the staff, from the managing editor to the copy-boys, lingered over a chop or a sandwich and a mug of beer, and enjoyed the first real respite of the long day. But, after two or three visits to Biersach's, Tomlins stopped going to supper with the others. As soon as his evening assignments were disposed of, and he was free to seek a bite to eat before entering upon the "dog watch," he would mysteriously disappear.

"Where do you feed now?" demanded Wilson, after Tomlins, on three successive nights, had declined his invitation to "go over to the Dutchman's."

"I live only a short way up the street," explained the little man, straightforwardly, "so I go home for lunch."



"Economize on a ten-cent plate of beans, and you'll own a trust some day," volunteered Wilson, thoughtlessly.

Tomlins flushed, but said nothing.

It was nearly a month later when the city editor, while locking up his desk one night, exclaimed in an amused undertone to Blake:

"Look at that!"

"What?" asked the assistant, impaling two short items on a spindle, and clearing away with a single sweep the débris of several hours' copy-reading.

"Tomlins."

Blake turned, and saw the police reporter effusively greeting a rather pretty girl, a year or two his junior, who was standing smilingly on the threshold.

"Who is she?"

"From the telephone office, probably. He has his nerve with him, bringing 'em up here!"

"Learning city ways fast. Not such a child, after all!"

The city editor smiled grimly. His work for the day was finished, and he felt in fairly good humor.

As he and Blake passed out, Tomlins kept on talking with his midnight visitor, apparently undisturbed by the fact that several curious glances were sent in his direction.

"Wait till I call up the station to see if anything is doing," he said, as his superior disappeared, "and we'll go and get something to eat."

The following night, however, the city editor's mood was far less amiable. A fire and a railroad accident were providing extra work for everybody, and, as luck would have it, Mr. Edwards glanced up from a stack of unread copy, just as Tomlins—who should have been devoting sole attention to a section of the fire story—nodded and smiled in the direction of the door. It was only one nod and one smile, and the young woman for whom they were intended remained quietly near the file table, while Tomlins reburied himself in the details of the conflagration. But the city editor's wrath was aroused; he scowled and bided his time.

"See here, Tomlins," he said, sharply, as the police reporter turned in what he had written, "we can't have you bringing girls up here in the office. You're hired to work, not," he added, brutally, "to chase women."

Tomlins's cheeks turned scarlet, and a lump crept into his throat. Then he blurted out:

"That's my wife."

"Eh? . . . Oh!" It was the city editor's turn to flush. He bent over Tomlins's copy, and asked, abruptly: "Is this all of the fire story?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you get the insurance list?"

"Yes."

"There ought to be a good follow-up on this to-morrow."

Tomlins went to Mrs. Tomlins, while the city editor gasped under his breath, "Wouldn't that craze you?"

When little Mrs. Tomlins appeared the following night, no word of protest came from the desk in the corner. Nor was official criticism provoked when it became apparent that her calls would be regular occurrences. Every evening at the luncheon hour she entered quietly, sent a timid glance in the direction of Tomlins's desk, gravely answered his smile, and retired to the file table. She never intruded. If Tomlins was busy, she glanced over the files until he was free to join her. Before long, the other men would nod pleasantly, or stop for a word or two of greeting as they passed out. She was a sweet-faced, soft-voiced little girl, no more resembling a full-fledged wife than Tomlins did a completed husband. Even the city editor, as he noted how carefully she held herself aloof, assumed toward her a manner surprisingly cordial, going so far one evening as to send the copy-boy across the room with a chair. Thereafter, that chair remained near the door for the exclusive use of Mrs. Tomlins.

"I should think she'd get tired, sitting up till midnight," Mr. Edwards remarked to the night editor one evening, after reporting that every-

thing in his department was "cleaned up."

"Midnight! Till the paper goes to press."

"What!"

"Sure. She stays as long as he does."

"Until four?"

"Yep. Comes back after lunch, and sits patiently by herself while he goes his rounds. Sometimes takes a walk with him over to the station, but usually practises on his type-writer or sews till he's ready to go home."

"Well, wouldn't that craze you?"

The night editor agreed that it would, but ventured to add that it didn't do any particular harm. "He does his work all right, doesn't he?" he suggested, by way of extenuation.

"Yes, fairly so."

"Sort of a pleasant little chap. Nice girl, too. He says she insisted upon this arrangement. They haven't any friends in town, and she was lonesome."

"As long as he attends to business, I don't suppose it matters if he brings up all his relatives," conceded the city editor.

For the better part of a year, Mrs. Tomlins's coming was as regular as clockwork. New men came and went, but Tomlins held his position. His wife's presence interfered not with the garnering of police news, and therefore troubled no one. But, without warning, her visits suddenly ceased.

A week's failure to appear occasioned comment.

"Where's your wife?" asked Wilson, bluntly, one evening, as Tomlins started out alone.

"She's not very well," was the answer, given with some hesitation. "In fact, she—she won't be around again for some time."

Wilson understood. "Oh!" he said.

The other members of the staff were duly informed, and the news occasioned general interest. Not a man in the shop but liked little Tomlins; not one but had felt in some small measure the influence of a tender little smile which had been timidly

directed toward the police reporter's desk each evening on the stroke of twelve.

Had not the secret leaked out in this prompt manner, Tomlins's troubled expression would eventually have shown that something serious was impending. As the weeks crept by, his cheeks lost their color, while the corners of the mouth revealed two hard little lines that had no business on the face of a boy.

"I'm worried, Wilson," was the wholly superfluous admission which he made one evening, after the others had gone. The marine reporter listened sympathetically.

"How's the wife coming along?" he asked.

"The doctor says that I haven't any reason to be frightened; that she is doing as well as they ever do," was the hopeful answer. "But it's hard on a woman, Wilson; don't you know it is? We men don't realize—we don't begin to realize."

Even to Wilson, "men and women" seemed hardly the words to describe Tomlins and little Mrs. Tomlins.

"Oh, she'll come through it all right," he said, awkwardly. "When—when is it expected?"

"Late this week—Saturday, probably." Tomlins's lips trembled, and he shook his curly head anxiously.

"Cheer up," suggested Wilson, helplessly.

"Do you mind my telling troubles like this, Wilson? It's a sort of relief to talk things over with some one besides myself. I'm not complaining—it isn't that, but—but I can't help worrying."

"Go ahead. Talk as much as you want to, old man."

"The money part doesn't worry me at all—though, of course, this is going to set me back a good deal. But my credit is good, and I can work. You see, when we left Kaloosa we hardly expected it would cost us quite so much to live here. Eighteen dollars a week sounded pretty big to me. But Lucy was mighty plucky, and we got started all right. We were mar-

ried just as soon as I got this chance on the *Times*. Her folks were willing, and I didn't have any folks, so all we did was to come and start house-keeping. Of course, it wasn't much like real housekeeping, I suppose"—as if fearing his words might be construed as boasting—"but our two dinky rooms have answered very well. . . . Only, I didn't figure, Wilson—and I should have—of course, there's no excuse for my not having done so—on anything like this happening. . . . And—and I suppose it's rather hard for every father, the first time; don't you suppose it is?"

Wilson nodded, soberly. "Sure," he said.

"And now," burst out little Tomlins, impulsively, "if anything should happen to that wife of mine, Wilson, I shouldn't want to live, that's all!" Two large tears trickled down his cheeks, and were impatiently brushed away. "I'm a regular damned baby, I'm afraid," he said.

"Keep up your nerve, old man," protested Wilson, uncomfortably. "Let's go over to Biersach's and get a bean."

"No, I guess I'll chase up home a minute."

Even though staff etiquette hardly permitted an open avowal of good wishes on so delicate a theme, more than one *Times* man felt deeply for little Tomlins. The end of the week approached without alarming bulletins; but tired eyes and an absurd "old" look bore evidence of the depth of the little man's anxiety.

Friday night arrived, and Tomlins, pale and careworn, came in from the street. "Some time before morning," he had whispered, in a half-frightened tone to Wilson early in the evening. "The woman with her promised to 'phone me if—I'm needed."

Before returning to the office, after covering his evening assignments, he had run up home to ascertain that, so far, all was well.

"I'll be back soon, Lucy girl," he had whispered to the pale little woman,

who was trying her bravest to smile. "Don't worry, dear."

With a parting injunction to Mrs. Riley about telephoning, he hurried to the office to write up the cheering details of a suicide at the Soldiers' Home.

Every time the telephone rang—an average of once a minute—poor little Tomlins glanced up nervously, then resolutely returned to his work. Wilson noted this, and went to the city editor's desk for a moment's conversation.

"Tomlins," he said, on returning, "I'll do the 'dog watch' to-night."

Tomlins looked up, gratefully. "Thank you, Wilson," he said, huskily. "It's awfully good of you, and I'll—"

"That's all right, old man," interposed Wilson, hastily. "As soon as you get your stuff up, turn it in, and vamoose."

Tomlins finished his suicide story, and hurried away.

"Wilson!"

The city editor's voice, harsh and rasping, summoned the marine reporter to the copy-desk, the following afternoon.

"You're to cover police to-day—probably for several days. Tomlins won't be down—"

"All right," in an awed tone. "Is—?"

"—and the men are putting in a quarter apiece for some flowers. Do you want to contribute?"

"Yes, sir. But—but is she dead?"

"Dead? Who said anything about dead? I can't waste my time explaining things! They're for Tomlins's baby, and if you don't want to contribute, you needn't. And—and see that you get a good follow-up story on that gas-house explosion! . . . All this blamed nonsense over a baby!"

. . . And—and, Wilson, come back here; what are you running away for before I'm through? If you have time, you might stop in on your way back from the gas-house to see how Mrs. Tomlins is getting along."

## A BALLADE OF LOST KISSES

YOU who by seashore and mountain pine  
 Have captured kisses not a few,  
 Who have taken your share, as I have mine,  
 Of the gifts that the kind gods gave to you—  
 Sweet is the list you've to reckon through  
 And none to be marked with a vain regret—  
 Yet, since with pleasure there must be rue,  
 What of the kisses you didn't get?

Gracious the lips that did not decline  
 To pay the toll that you counted due.  
 A kiss as love's token or friendship's sign—  
 What does it matter, one or two?  
 A fond reward for a worshiper true—  
 Gloves to a kiss make a crafty bet!  
 All who a roguish lass pursue,  
 What of the kisses you didn't get?

Was it, perchance, that the lamplight's shine  
 Lay over-bright where you said adieu?  
 Were the eyes too careless or too divine  
 That you lost yourself in their depths of blue?  
 The face you left when the Spring winds blew,  
 Was it laughter lit or teardrop wet  
 That you somehow shirked what you meant to do—  
 What of the kisses you didn't get?

## ENVOY

Lads and lovers of every hue,  
 Ancients, who linger a little yet,  
 You boast of the kisses that once you knew—  
 But what of the kisses you didn't get?

EDWARD BARRON.



## APPROPRIATE

TICKERLY—Why do they say “dabble in stocks”?  
 TAPESON—It must be on account of the water that is in most of them.



MODERN life has produced at least two wonders—a clock that won't stop for two years, and a cook that won't stop for two weeks.

# THE LINK

By Stephen French Whitman

“IS it possible that these rooms belong to a Japanese?”

The American stared at him deliberately, his white face and white linen gleaming in the semi-gloom. He raised his eyebrows, noting the heavy hangings that muffled the evening clatter of New York streets; the weighty, gilded picture-frames; the deep leather chairs, the few ponderous, masculine ornaments. The pervading air of refinement was distinctly Occidental.

“I am disappointed,” he said.

“Why?” asked his companion, quietly.

This was a little man, nearly lost in one of the great chairs. He lighted a cigarette; the flame showed high, brown cheek-bones, full, slightly oblique eyelids, a short, bristling moustache of black. He sat up, his shirt crackling over his diminutive chest.

“Why?” he repeated. “This is New York. You have never seen Tamamura? I assure you that he would not wear a kimono to shave in. Long ago, in Tokyo, he was distinctly—er—progressive.”

The American shrugged his shoulders, and sat down in a long chair.

“The deuce!” he said, with a short laugh. “You new Japanese have completely buried your lacquer armor and—other things, together.”

The Japanese laughed the polite, staccato laugh of his kind.

“You are disappointed,” he said, speaking slowly and with a nicer regard for enunciation than his companion, “you are disappointed because we Japanese of to-day are not book Japanese—play Japanese. You will find

a few still across the water. But when your illustrious commodore opened our country, he dug the grave for our lacquer armor. We are, I suppose, naturally—er—eclectic. We have come out to do business with you, for one thing, and we have lost our pretty ways. But we have yours in exchange—not so pretty, but more practical. We have lost old politesse, you see, old ideals, and—old gods. Most of us do very well without them all. There are compensations.”

“And this Tamamura?”

“You see,” said the little man, waving a slim hand, “they might be your rooms, the rooms of any prosperous, unmarried, well-bred, middle-aged Westerner. Tamamura is quite that. His name and his—er—physical exterior are Japanese, that is all. His brain—who knows? One cannot quite eradicate racial instinct except by trepanning and cutting, I suppose. He has eradicated a great deal, in one manner or another. I am sorry he is not in. I would have liked you to meet him. . . . It is gloomy here, isn’t it, in spite of all these things about? Something too solemn—almost a little like a—mausoleum? Perhaps we can find the electric buttons?”

The little man got up and wandered to the door. Suddenly, he gave an exclamation of satisfaction, and the place blazed with light.

He stood by the door, darkly yellow, dapper in diminutive evening clothes, smiling almost smugly about the lighted room. His companion heaved himself from the long chair, and once more paced heavily around the rug, his pale face expressing renewed curiosity.



"Really, not a cloisonné vase, not a Satsuma cup, nor a bronze minnow. Bronzes—yes—of Gérôme's! A Cellini sort of medallion! A genre picture of—of Chayllery, by Jove! Why here, in heaven's name?"

"He is, as I told you, very progressive." There seemed almost to be a thread of pride in the thin voice of the Japanese, for the fellow-countryman who had so effectually buried his beginnings under these things.

"He is very progressive. See here. He has eradicated the last true native repulsion. Here is a nude of Henner's."

The American continued his inspection.

"Tell me something about him," he said, examining the green-and-white Henner. The Japanese lighted another cigarette.

"First," he said, "a Kyoto man, of an old family. Iyeyasu's warriors they were once, fierce little chaps, all swords and honor. He was married in his youth—a real romance, I have heard, rare enough when both houses are so eminently—er—respectable. You would have liked him then—ha! ha!—you would have written a story about him then, no doubt. He was picturesque, and wore kimonos, and lived between paper walls.

"His wife died young, and he came to Tokyo. He got some small offices and raised large interests. He turned progressive, and, consequently, made money, became new Japanese. He came to America. Now he is decidedly rich. He has been very successful."

"He seems to have lost something," said the other.

"He does? Ah, I see. He has lost his old gods. I believe—yes, he was a Buddhist before he knew better."

"And now?"

"Now? He knows better. It is a pretty religion. I suppose one is as good as another. Have you noticed that the lights do not make the room any less—tomblike?"

"Yes," said the American, curiously. "There is a little of that, though why, with all these pleasant things about— I'm going to explore

—to be rude. What's behind that curtain?"

"Bedroom?" ventured the Japanese, coughing over his cigarette.

"Brass bed," prophesied the American, moving toward the door, "mahogany dressing-case and—hello! Kobayashi, come here. I think I've found something Japanese!"

The little man joined him, and looked into the inner room. When he saw, against a wall, a little gold-and-lacquer case on a stand, his narrow eyes widened. He slipped in and stood before it.

"Remarkable!" he ejaculated.

It was a little *butsudan*, a Buddhist household shrine, with closed gold-and-lacquer doors carved like temple gates. The chasing on the hinges was exquisite. The lock was a tiny gold flower. Under the American's hand it clicked, and the doors swung open.

"Ahaw!"—one long-drawn, smothered exclamation from the Japanese.

Inside, on the raised, gold-plated shelf, there were three objects. There was an upright tablet of wood, something like a miniature, foot-high tombstone, with ideographs gilded on its face. There was another like it, a trifle larger and more ornate, but the first ideograph on this was scarlet; the rest were gold, as on the other. In front of the first stood an eggshell cup. There was dust over everything.

"What significance?" asked the American, looking down at the yellow face that was curiously contorted by astonishment.

The Japanese drew a long breath.

"Tch, tch, tch! It is very remarkable. I find it rather hard to believe. Tamamura! Tch, tch! . . . Well it is a *butsudan*, a shrine. In Japan the Buddhists keep the tablets of their dead in them. This tablet—this smaller tablet—is one. It is of his dead wife! Here is her posthumous title in gold on it. See? This other—Now, it is a custom, when a very dear wife dies, and the husband takes a vow never to marry again, for him to have an *ihai*—a tablet—made with her name in gold on it, and another made

with his name on it, the first ideograph in red. And he places them both in the shrine. And every day he sets a cup of fresh tea before hers. It is a sign of his vow never to marry again, you see? Her name all in gold—his with one character in red, which shows that he is still living. The red character shows that he is still living. . . . So."

The American stared, quite motionless.

"Where," he asked, finally, "is your man who has left all his old gods behind him?"

The Japanese, after a moment, smiled slowly.

"At least," he said, "it is the last—er—link. And look! Dust in the tea-cup! When do you think it was filled last? It is here, surely. But it is my conviction that the last link is very weak."

"If it is, more's the pity."

The little man snapped the *butsudan's* latch shut, and held the door hangings open.

"We are hardly polite," he said, drily; "we rather pry into Tamamura's affairs, do we not? Let us find his cigarettes; mine are gone. Listen. I believe he is coming——"

The hall door opened, and the owner of the rooms came in.

"Gentlemen, I am sorry to have kept you waiting——"

He was very small, very ugly, sparse-mustached, and irreproachable from top-hat to boots. Of the three types of Japanese face, his was the Uralian—the Asiatic—eyes oblique, face long, nose somewhat high.

He laid down his hat and gloves, and acknowledged the American's introduction by a passive handclasp. When he spoke, it was as though from behind a finely modeled mask.

"You write things? I see them sometimes. But not a newspaper man? Then I shall tell you something, Kobayashi. I am to be married."

He lighted a cigarette, and smiled a dry, mirthless, *de rigueur*, little smile. His fellow-countryman uttered a surprised, banal congratulation, and the

American murmured politely and unintelligibly. These two, who had just stood before the *butsudan* in the inner room, let their eyes meet for a moment, and then looked guilelessly at their host. He waved them to chairs, and rang for bottles and glasses.

"I am to be married," he said, after a pause, "to Miss Cheiratton. Miss Cheiratton's father is the tea Cheiratton, as you know, Kobayashi. I consider it a very desirable alliance, as does he. She is an estimable young woman, and, in spite of my obvious shortcomings, she considers it so, too."

"When?" asked Kobayashi.

"When arranged? Only to-night. Or when accomplished? The sooner, the better. It will mean a—combination of interests, as you can imagine. So romance slips into business—ha! ha! Scotch, Mr.—er? This is quite absurd, parading my uninteresting affairs before you. But Kobayashi is perhaps my oldest friend in this country. Now we shall talk of something else. Do you like old Ovids and such things? I have a very fine one here, that I picked up a few days ago——"

Under the stars, the American looked at the Japanese quizzically.

"I am glad to have met him," he said. "As you say, saving name and body, he is as Western as you. A marriage of commercial convenience, eh? To an American girl. An American girl—h'm. And, by Jove! he looks at it as he would at a tea deal——"

He drew on his gloves, slowly.

"I am glad to have seen the *butsudan*, too," he said.

Kobayashi looked at him for a moment, and smiled satirically in the starlight.

"Ah—the little, dusty *butsudan*," he said. "Good night."

## II

THE American was coming into his study next morning, when Kobay-

ashi's card was brought to him. The Japanese followed it—a little, somber, correct figure behind the big servant.

He sat down in silence and began to smoke mechanically, his yellow face less in repose, more readable than usual. His expression was of vague, ill-suppressed excitement.

Finally, "Tamamura has gone off," he said.

"What do you mean?"

The Japanese waved his slim fingers lightly about his forehead.

"His mental poise is—er—suddenly disturbed somehow. All since last night. Liver—or something, I don't know. He came to me this morning and told me very strange things. He is not at all himself. I don't know how, just how, I should go about telling you. If you were a Japanese, if you had been raised in the superstitions of my country, it would be easy—told in ten words. But you would like to hear?"

"Certainly."

"Well—" Kobayashi smoked in silence for a minute and then said:

"This is the story as he told it to me. I believe I should tell some one, in case he becomes—er—seriously ill. Of course, you will understand that it is all in his brain? He has had a hallucination, that is all. A Japanese, who did not know, who had not got beyond such things, would go to a priest—a Buddhist—and buy a charm. Ha! ha! I sent him to a nerve specialist, and told him to talk very little.

"This is the whole matter. Last night, when we left him, he sat and smoked—a great deal of tobacco is not the best thing for nerves, you know—and considered this—er—Cheiratton alliance. Finally, he got up, turned down the lights, and went to the bedroom door, to go to bed. When he opened the door, he says, a breeze blew on him from the darkness within.

"Now, notice. It was fresh, warm, Spring air, with a smell and—er—texture to it that struck some strings of his heart and set them vibrating,

in a way that he had not known for many years. He felt like a young man, not in his body, you know—in his emotions, old, familiar emotions—emotions that he had not felt for a long time. So this strange breeze blew out from the black bedroom.

"He went in, and the door came shut after him, noiselessly. He could not find the knob to open it again. There was a strange feeling about a familiar room, as when one gets up in the night and loses his sense of location. He stumbled forward, and the warm breeze, with the scent of flowers in it, blew gently about him. Before him there was one wall that seemed slightly luminous. He could not place the furniture, but he struck none of it, and that bedroom is a small room. And he felt, all at once, that this room he had stepped into was not his own room at all!

"Then he heard something stirring somewhere, and a sound like a woman crying softly. He stood still, shaking—and he should be a brave man, too, as his father was. And then he threw himself forward, toward the luminous wall, and crashed against it—and—

"It was a paper wall—*shoji*—a Japanese wall! His hands went through it, and where his hands went through, moonlight came in and the breeze, this warm breeze, full of the perfume of plum-blossoms. He could hear the plum-trees rustling outside. He could see them there, through the broken *shoji*, dull white against a strange, open, indigo landscape!

"Then he turned, and he could see the room dimly. It was empty—only pale mats, an alcove, a dim-painted wall of sliding screens opposite—the room of his house in Kyoto, years ago! As he looked, the wall of sliding screens opposite began to move. A panel slid slowly open. There were two women in the opening, on their knees—Japanese women—white faces and dark, dark kimonos, their hair hanging about their thin cheeks. They stared at him with great eyes, shining

in the gloom, in this Kyoto room that had been his New York room an hour before. And all the while he heard the plum-blossoms rustling outside the broken *shoji*, and saw tears running down these women's cheeks from their great eyes. Then these two, in thin, far-off voices, said: 'She is dead.'

"That is all . . . . 'She is dead' . . . . And he fell down—fainted. That is, this morning his man found him lying in front of the *butsudan*."

Kobayashi looked frowningly at his dead cigarette for a time. The American did not stir.

"Now," said the Japanese, finally, "it was just such a night, years ago, in Kyoto, that his wife died, so he says. And then, too, he staggered in the dark against the *shoji* of his house and broke them, and the breeze blew in so. And, at that moment, the wall of the next room was pushed open, and the two women of his house knelt there in the opening, just so, and said, 'She is dead.' . . . ."

"He says that the horror of it last night was that it was so real. It was not intangible, misty, like an illusion—it was all material to him. He felt the *shoji*, and smelled the breeze, and it was as actual, as familiar as though something had picked him up at the bedroom door and hurled him back, years and years, to that night. There they knelt, those two, with the tears running down their white cheeks. And he says that he felt that the dead woman was behind the screens, lying on her quilts, white and straight——"

The Japanese concealed a shiver with a shrug.

"It was easy to see that something was very wrong with him this morning. When I say he was not himself, I mean more than the words. He had strange, flighty ideas—superstitions half-formed, half-remembered, dug out of his brain from the time when he was—was old Japanese. He seemed to be losing all the—all the mental progression that he had got himself, through these sane, modern years of his. He was very much shaken up, you see.

"But I reasoned with him, and—er—bullied and scorched him into comparative reason. Great heavens! he was quoting a Buddhist text to me at one time! You know our literature—and every twentieth story of a dead wife, forgotten, and what follows—in that literature. I opened the window of my room, and let in the rattle of elevated trains and the din of factory whistles, and wore down his thoughts, little by little, with such things, and talk to match. I talked of bromides and a nerve doctor, until I had him—er—around. And I have made him promise—and this is the measure of the success—and I have made him promise to go back there, and take these wretched, mortuary tablets from that *butsudan* in broad daylight, and—by Jove!—throw them in the river!"

"Good God!" muttered the American. "They are——"

"I know," said the Japanese, his keen little face sharpening, "I know what they are—no, what they were. They are nothing to-day. They can mean nothing to him after what he told us last night. They are potent in nothing material. And understand, I did not get him to throw them away through a thread—a mote of superstition. Thank heaven, my nerves are all right. It is because of their possible effect on him. They are ghosts enough themselves—of things that should reasonably be stone dead to him. They are better done with. Why has he kept them—why has he hung on to that last, futile link? Bah!"

The American sat looking long at the smoke curl from the cigarette.

"He will marry Miss——"

"Tch! Why not? why not? Shall I let my friend be terrorized by his worn-out nerves? And last night I called him progressive, and to-day, on my life, I think that down in his heart he would have given a very great deal to see a Buddhist priest! But he was all apart, that was it. The racial instinct, you know, that we cannot eradicate—it shoulders up when the brain is chaotic. Well——"

"And he will go back there to-night?"

"Why not? The tablets in the river—the last link hurled away—let him face his leather chairs and genre pictures. What is there in them to harm him? He must go to meet his malady and fight it. He must beat it down."

"Yes," said the American, "if that is what it is——"

### III

EARLIER next morning than before the Japanese called again. Entering, he waggled a note in a nervous, yellow hand, from the doorway. He sank down deep in a big chair, looking with an expression half confused, half uneasy, from the note to the silent American and back. At length:

"Well—you must forgive me for haunting you this way—he has done it."

"Which?" asked the other, motionless.

"Listen. This note came by messenger last night. I will read you a bit."

"H'm. 'Proved own satisfaction mental derangement, overwork'—not that. Here it is:

"To take out the root, as you say. Just back from doing that. To-night—the sun was hardly set—I wrapped up both the *ihai* with a paper-weight, and took them on a ferry-boat and dropped them into the river. They sank at once. They are gone. Already I think I am quite myself again.'"

The Japanese looked up slowly, with a puckered frown. "Quite himself. And I will bet you that when he wrote that he did not know he wrote, for the first time in years—so."

He spread the letter face up. It was not English, but a scribble of grass writing—hurried, straggling, Japanese script.

"I am not easy," he said, jumping up and walking over to the American. "You and I—I seem to have dragged you into this, don't I? I am going to his rooms now—right now—and I hope you will come with me."

"Of course, at once."

They went down and climbed silently into a cab at the curb. When they were on their way, the American turned

and put a big hand on his companion's little arm.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked.

The Japanese shrugged his lean shoulders, and his high cheeks were patched dimly with color.

"I can't tell you," he said, almost sullenly; "I am foolish. I shall find him eating a grape-fruit and reading the market, I know. It was gray dawn when I woke up, and things looked differently then. In this sunlight, you see—I am foolish, and yet, I feel that I want to go there and see for myself."

"You have been recalling those stories? Of the dead vines?"

"Bah! Ghost tales are all very well in their place, you know. In those tales, anyway, things always happen to the second woman. Oh, invariably. In this case—the old fellows who fathered Japanese literature didn't have much experience with foreign women, you see. I don't know just what they'd do in a case like that—it's a little beyond their pale."

It's very impertinent to dress a man's liver trouble up as a ghost story, isn't it? Ghost stories don't go with hansoms and asphalt pavements and fresh sunlight, do they?"

The cab rattled along; the two men sat silent and stiff for a time. Finally the American leaned back.

"So he drowned the *ihai*," said he, "the little wife's *ihai* he had saved from the wreck? Wrapped up with a paper-weight; from a ferry-boat . . . And the other—his own, too, eh? The dead *ihai* and the living he drowned . . ."

"If you please, not," said the Japanese, querulously. "You speak as though he had drowned himself."

They rode on in silence.

Finally, they came to the apartment-house where Tamamura lived. Clean sunlight flooded the vestibule; the hall within was bright with many-colored splashes of light, streaming through stained glass. There was small room for ominous anticipation in this cheery radiance. But as the door of Tama-



mura's little hall opened to their ring, both men paused involuntarily before entering, struck with the contrast of the atmosphere within to the atmosphere without—the vague, indefinite, depressing atmosphere that they had noticed on that night before.

Behind the somber English servant standing there the door of Tamamura's library was ajar. Within was dimness, through which the white shape of the Henner on the wall glimmered faintly, almost like a cold, white figure hovering there, naked, in the dusk.

With a muttered apology, the servant followed them in and opened a shutter.

"Mr. Tamamura?" said the Japanese, darting a glance at the closed bedroom door.

"I have not waked him, sir."

"Wake him," said the Japanese, shortly, with a quick, involuntary gesture. As he stood in the narrow path of light from the open shutter, an expression half of deprecated shame struggled with another expression on his yellow face. The American stood silent, his face a white spot in the gloom by the dead fireplace.

As the servant went across the floor, the Japanese turned with a twist of his mouth to his companion.

"This is all ridiculous," he whispered, with a wry smile. "Now that we are here, I can adjust myself to the absurdity of it. I have no excuse to give him; I cannot tell him what made me come, for I cannot tell myself that. I think I need a nerve specialist myself. What is that?"

"Gentlemen"—the servant stood with his back toward the bedroom door—"gentlemen, the door is locked. Mr. Tamamura never locks it. I have knocked. He does not answer."

The American strode to the door. He knocked once, twice, three times. He called. The Japanese, too, beside him, called the name of the man within, with a string of words in his own tongue, that came crowding to his mouth now, involuntarily. The sibilant, crackling phrases sounded loud

and nerve-jarring in the quiet, gloomy room.

No answer.

"Stand out of the way," said the American, sharply.

The locked door splintered under his shoulder, swayed, fell inward into the square darkness with a crash. The three men stepped back, with one movement, from what they could not see.

And from within, a cool, damp, sweetish smell, as of blossoms, and the air of another place, drifted out and about them.

It was dark inside; apparently every window was muffled. In the faint light that trickled from the open shutter across the library, the little *butsudan* within glimmered. It was very still in there.

The Japanese drew back, clasping his hands to keep them from twitching. The American, with elbows crooked, white hands, half-curved, reaching forward, looked in for a moment, and then, squaring his shoulders, stepped suddenly into the dark little room.

The Japanese's mouth was open. He leaned forward. From between his lips came, all unconsciously, old, old words of prayer.

"*Namu Amida Butsu . . . Namu Amida Butsu . . .*"

A match glimmered inside, low down near the floor. Its red flicker lighted, for a second, something lying there. As it went out, the American appeared in the doorway, his face white, his forehead glistening.

"He is dead," he said, in a small, choked voice.

He faltered, glanced over his shoulder, and swallowed. "He is dead," he said, "and that is not all. His clothes are dripping with salt water. His face is the face of a drowned man. Here, in this house, my God! is a man lying dead from drowning in salt water!"

He stood there staring and staring at the others, and there was the horror of dreadful things set on the three faces in the gloomy room. Then his

eyes widened, he turned, and went in again.

They heard him rattling in the darkness with the *butsudan*.

He came out again. The two shrank back from him. In each hand, stretched forth quivering, he held an *ihai*—a mortuary tablet—the mortuary tablets that the dead man, the night before, had thrown into the river. With a convulsive gesture he hurled them from him to the floor.

"Look at them," he cried, hoarsely, stark fear in his voice, "they were in the *butsudan*. Look at them! They are soaked with salt water, the *butsudan* is dripping with salt water!"

The Japanese, half crouching, with

staring eyes, drew back, step by step, lifting his feet. "*Namu Amida Butsu*," he whispered.

Suddenly, he stopped. He pointed to the floor.

"The *ihai*! The *ihai* of Tamamura! Do you see? Do you see? The ideograph!"

The *ihai* of Tamamura lay face up on the floor. On its smooth surface a red ideograph had always blazed—the sign of life. It was gone. In its place, shining in the gloom, was a gold ideograph of the dead.

They were both the same now—the tablet of the man, newly dead, and the tablet of the long-dead wife.



## LA CRUCHE CASSÉE

TWO things there are that make the whole world bright,  
That down to our poor earth draw heaven divine,  
That up to their pure heaven lift earth, that shine  
In joy and woe alike with quenchless light,  
And make all wrong less wrong, all right more right:  
The child and mother—in each face the sign  
Of God's soft seal is fresh; His love benign  
Laughs in their hearts all day, broods there all night.

O little maid, thou interblended gleam  
Of child that was, of woman yet to be,  
Which sweetest is we know not of the three—  
The hope, the memory, or the painted dream.  
Thou only, Art, canst changeless keep the mild,  
Faint evanescence of the woman-child.

G. M. G.



## NATURAL SEQUENCE

CRAWFORD—How was it you changed your mind about staying in town all Summer?

CRABSHAW—My wife changed hers about going away.

# “ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL”

By Dorothy Canfield

IT was in a shady nook on “Flirtation,” where the rocks sloped directly from their feet to the Hudson. With a reckless disregard of regulations, the cadet had unfastened the top hook of his collar and, with his hands clasped behind his head, was gazing meditatively at the girl who was opening a box of candy. It looked like the regulation arrangement on “Flirtation,” but it was not. The girl was from New Hampshire, and had a sense of humor.

Besides, she was evidently expectant. She arranged her skirts comfortably, tilted her parasol at an angle which shaded the cadet's head as well as her own, and then said, “Now, Allan, you promised you'd tell me all about it. There's no reason for putting it off.”

The cadet rubbed his close-cropped head thoughtfully. “I'll tell it on one condition—that you don't interrupt. I don't believe you can help it, but I warn you now, that if you break in a single time I won't finish the story.”

The girl laid the candy-box on one side, crossed her heart, and, raising eyes to the Spring-blue sky, chanted solemnly:

“Honest and true, honest and true,  
Lay me down and cut me in two!”

The cadet laughed, and then grew serious. “You're not in the proper frame of mind. This is the story of my engagement I'm going to tell you. It's no funny business—being engaged to be married! Makes a fellow do some thinking.”

“Well, if I were the girl, I must say I'd enjoy having you take such a funeral view of it!”

“That,” said the cadet, as he reached for the candy-box, “is the last speech I won't count as an interruption.

“I'm going to start in by saying that you don't know the girl, but that she's a wonder! It all happened about a year and a half ago—when she'd been coming up to the Point for several months, to hops and things. She was the gayest little ‘fem’ you ever saw—always cracking jokes and laughing like a chime of bells.

“You know our set of six fellows, and how we always hang together. Well, we were together on this proposition all right! We thought she was about the funniest little girl that ever came along. She was always saying something you didn't think she was going to. I remember she was the only girl I ever saw who had something new to say when we told her we called our room-mates our ‘wives.’ And I tell you no ‘spoonoid’ had any chance around her. She's got the prettiest eyes, that look as though they'd be just great for looking soft, but she kept them snapping so with fun that there wasn't any use trying to do the spoon.

“Well, a year ago last Fall, when I was a second-class man, I was sitting in my room one evening, boning on math. I'd been working like a horse trying to ‘max’ my calculus, and I was as grouchy as a bear. My ‘wife’ was not any company, for he'd been ‘doing area’ ever since two o'clock, and had turned in so dead tired you couldn't have waked him with an ax. I was getting lonesomer and lonesomer, and feeling more and more as though I wanted a blow-out of some kind to

put some life into me, when there was a whoop at the door and the five fellows of the gang came in, all talking at once. Puddenhead had a letter, waving it in the air, and the only thing I could get out of them was that Helen was engaged. I had two Helens on the string about that time, and I was considerably excited till after about five minutes they got smoothed down enough for me to make out that they meant this girl I'm telling about. I hadn't thought of her at all. She wasn't the kind you'd ever think of as sobering down enough to get engaged. Puddenhead had had a letter from a girl in Bridgeport, where Helen lived, and she said Helen's engagement to a 'cit' named Beardsley was just announced. Well, we were great pals of Helen's, and we were sore that she hadn't told us anything about it. Puddenhead said, 'Think of her nerve! She's coming up to a hop to-morrow night just as though nothing had happened. She thinks she's going to fool us. We'll just let her know that she can't get ahead of us with her practical jokes. Let's meet her as the 'bus comes up to the top of the hill and shout out "congratulations!" till they can hear us on the other side of Parade Ground.'

"I was just going to say I was game for that, when 'Big' Marshall began jumping up and down and hollering, 'I got you beat! I got you beat! I got an idea that beats that all to frazzles! Let's all six of us never let on we've heard a thing, and then all propose to her, heavy-tragedy style, during the hop—take on as though we were broken-hearted, and then have the laugh on her the next day.'

"Say, that struck us all right, all right! We just went into the air. I could just see Helen's funny eyes crinkling up into her jolly laugh when we told her the next day. We laughed so, fixing up our different proposals, that we almost went into fits, and I was so tickled when I went to bed, I just lay there and shook. To think we could turn the joke on Helen that way!

"We could hardly wait for the hop,

and when my dance with Helen came I proposed to sit it out on the balcony overlooking the Hudson, and I fairly shivered for fear she'd want to dance; but she didn't, and we went down the stairs together, me beginning to put on the proper solemn air.

"It was moonlight—a warm October evening. The Hudson looked like a black diamond with rubies all around it where the lights of the shore gleamed. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, and just the sweetest Autumn smell in the air. Oh, it was the proper stage-setting, all right! I lifted Helen up to the broad balustrade—same way I had lots of times before—and then I turned and gazed down the river, trying to look romantic. There never was a Doanes from Alabama who couldn't look romantic, when he put his mind to it, and I reckon I came up to the family standard. Helen was looking some romantic herself—staring down at her hands in her lap. I tell you, she looked pretty—any girl would, out there in the moonlight—but she looked like a regular little fairy.

"Well, I drew a long breath and started in. 'Helen,' I said, in a deep voice—I had to speak very low because there were lots of other people sitting out dances all around us—'Helen!' Then I went down about an octave, 'dear!' I thought right there was where the fun would start, but Helen never stirred—just sat and looked down at her hands in her lap.

"That made me mad, 'cause I was sure she was thinking so about that 'cit' Beardsley that she didn't even hear me. So I took on a load of Alabama fireworks, and whirled in in good earnest. Say, I won't tell you what I said to her, but you can just bet it was red-hot! I was going to give her her money's worth. I told her she was the only one in the world for me—that I had my future all fixed up with her in the midst of it, and it would be the death of me to unfix my ideas, that I would quit the service if there wasn't any hope for me—oh, you just imagine what an Alabama Doanes would do, turned loose with his imagi-

nation and without any fear of consequences, and you'll have *me*!

"Helen never said a thing—she couldn't, I was executing such a rapid-fire effect in my delivery—and when I lowered down my voice to nothing at all and said in a breath, 'Helen! Helen! Helen!' getting in an extra thrill every time, she just gave a little shiver, and that was all.

"By-and-bye I got through—even a Doanes from Alabama, can't keep it up forever!—and, besides, our dance was not going to last for all time, and I wanted to give the other fellows a chance. There was a long silence, and then Helen raised her head and looked at me.

"Say, it was a good thing I was leaning up against the balustrade, 'cause if it hadn't been for that I'd have fallen right down in a fit. The hills on the other side of the Hudson began to waver up and down, and in a minute they sprang right up and hit me on the head. Helen was looking at me with eyes like stars, and they changed every minute and got softer and softer till I was just melted and floated away in 'em. You wouldn't think she ever could have laughed out of them, they were so sweet and solemn. Her lips moved, and I could just hear her say, 'Allan, my Allan!'

"Then she did the prettiest thing I ever saw a girl do. There were a lot of 'spoonoids' sitting around, and we couldn't either of us do anything without their seeing us. She just brushed her lips with the tips of her fingers and then dropped her hand down on mine as it lay on the balustrade. It was the sweetest thing—but honest, it's no joke, I felt an electric shock that made me see stars. I was about the most startled and scared individual you ever saw, and what with that and my general feeling of goneness, I know I must have turned pale. She leaned over toward me and said, in the prettiest, lowest voice, that just went through me like a knife, 'Why, Allan, you must have known how I felt!'

"I gasped out something about her always jollyng so a fellow couldn't

know *what* she felt, and she said, reproachfully, 'Oh, dear boy, that was only to shelter myself. I was so afraid you would know and despise me.'

"I took another brace, and murmured some disjointed questions about the 'cit' Beardsley, but she caught me up short. 'You didn't believe that gossip! How little you can have known how—why, Allan, dear, sometimes when the slow old 'bus has been crawling up the hill from the station I've been fairly faint to think I should see you so soon. Do you remember that shoe-string you broke off, one afternoon, down on "Flirtation"? Now, listen, I'm going to tell you how foolish I am. I went back the next day and picked it up, and I've always kept it—think! all I've ever had of yours!' *Poor Helen!*

"I was just dissolving in thin air all this time—I was, for a fact! I couldn't feel the ground under my feet, and I had to hold on to the balustrade, hard, I was so light-headed and dizzy. Just then 'Big' Marshall came running out to get Helen for the next dance. I helped her down, and she gave my arm a little hidden pat, that couldn't have hurt worse if she'd hit me with a hammer! I watched her walk away with 'Big,' feeling meaner and meaner, till, as she turned and gave one backward look toward me, I just shriveled up to nothing at all. I moved around the corner to a place where I knew nobody'd come, and fell down on a chair, and took my head in my hands and did some tall thinking! First off, I took about an hour calling myself bad names. I'd think of the light in her eyes as she had looked at me, and curse myself for about the lowest, meanest specimen of humanity that ever drew breath. Then I lost my head for a while, I was so wild at the thought of what it meant to *me*! There I was—I wouldn't even be out of the Academy for two years, with fourteen years after that to wait for a captaincy—at least fourteen—and already engaged! I thought of excuses I could make—couldn't I tell her we had insanity in the family, or that I was



already engaged, or that—then I'd think of her voice as she had said, 'Allan, *my* Allan!' and feel too low-down to live, for having the heart to think of anything but how to make it up to her for the beastly thing I'd done. But you know me—I'm the kind, who, the minute he's tied to anything, *anything*, is wild to get loose—*me* engaged to be married, before I was even a second lieutenant! Then I'd think of Helen again, sweet, jolly little Helen, with all the fun gone out of her eyes and just the lovelight in them, and I'd brace up for a minute—only the next I'd think of always and always living up to what she thought I meant and never for a minute letting her know, 'cause an Alabama Doanes couldn't do less, and then I'd feel suffocated and as though I couldn't—I just *couldn't*! I groaned, out there by myself, as though I were going to die, and I felt as though I were—I wished I could!

"I was all in a tremble when I stood up finally, but my mind was made up. I was a Doanes from Alabama, and I wasn't going to go back on the woman who loved me—if it killed me! So I marched up the stairs to the hop, and found 'Army Blue' just being played, and in a minute the drums sounded and everybody was rushing around to get his girl home and himself back to barracks before taps. I tried to see Helen, but she was going home in the 'bus, and I only had a chance to say good night. All the other fellows were there, and all of a sudden I remembered about them! How could I ever explain to them so that they wouldn't know what had happened? They, of course, must have gone right on with the programme and had no idea it was not Beardsley she'd refused them for, but me! They went up and said 'Good night,' kind of melancholy, still carrying out their parts, and then we all stood together after the 'bus drove off. Helen was sitting on the end, and what do you think she did? Right there before all those fellows, she leaned out of the open door and blew a kiss to me! Say, that finished me all right.

When I came to, I found the other fellows had gone on, and I walked over to barracks alone, making resolutions every step I took. If a proud, sensitive girl like Helen goes so far as to show her feelings like that, there is only one thing for a gentleman and a cadet to do, and that is to come up to the scratch.

"That's what I kept saying over all night. I tell you, I didn't sleep much, and I didn't need reveille to wake me up in the morning. I was planning what I would say to Helen when I saw her the next afternoon. The first time I saw her would be the worst. After chapel, though, her aunt—her aunt is Captain Wadleigh's wife—told me that Helen had been telegraphed for to come to New York to see an uncle off on the steamer, and that she had left on the first train. Say, maybe I didn't feel like a reprieved prisoner! I caught the first long breath I'd had since the night before. But in a minute I knew I'd have to write; and that's what I did! All that afternoon I wrote and tore up and wrote and tore up, trying to fix just the letter she ought to get. I tried to think what I'd want a fellow to write if I were a girl just engaged to him, and then I'd write it. I threw in some, for good measure, but every time I read it over I was sure that wasn't the way a Doanes from Alabama would do it, and I'd tear it up and start all over again. Once I caught myself thinking what a shame it was to spend a whole precious Sunday afternoon doing that—and then I laid down the pen, and just groaned and groaned! For it came over me like a crack of thunder that it wasn't only *that* Sunday afternoon, but every single one for always and always that I couldn't have to myself. But I gritted my teeth, and thought of Helen's face as she leaned out of the door of the 'bus, all soft and quivery with joy, and I went on writing.

"I got some sort of a letter done, and was just starting out to post it, when Captain Wadleigh's orderly came up and said that Miss Helen had left a note for me and wished me to go over

to the house and get it. I started over there and posted the letter on the way. When I got to the gate I saw Puddenhead and 'Big' going up the walk, and two of the other fellows were looking out of the windows. I thought, 'Oh, Lord! Helen's probably left a note for all of them announcing our engagement. I won't have to put up a bluff or anything!'

"Mrs. Wadleigh was sitting inside talking to the fellows already there, and in a minute in came Adams, and there we were, all six. Mrs. Wadleigh got up and went over to her desk. 'You boys and Helen are such jokers!' she said. 'I don't know what the joke is this time, but I suppose it is some of Helen's nonsense. She asked me to give you all one of these.' With that she began handing around some little notes. I knew what it meant all right, and I waited a minute before I opened mine, for I didn't feel as though I had any right to read what Helen had written there. When I broke the seal an engraved card fell out and, as I looked at it, I got the shock of my life.

"'Mr. and Mrs. ——— request the honor of your presence at the marriage of their daughter Helen to Eugene Beardsley———'

"My heart turned over five times in rapid succession, and I had a goneeness that would have made an elephant feel weak. When I came to, there were all the other fellows sitting there as though somebody had knocked 'em on the head with a club. I heard myself saying, feebly, 'But she kissed her hand to me . . . ' when all the others

came out of their trance to say, 'Why, that was for *me!*' 'For *me!*' 'For *me!*'

"Just then we heard a funny noise, and there was that 'wife' of mine back of us, just gasping for breath, and so full of laughter he was black in the face. As we turned around and looked at him kind of dazed and fish-eyed, he was so tickled he gave a whoop, and fell on the floor in a fit. That blamed scalawag hadn't been asleep at all that night, and he had gone and told Helen all about our scheme; and say, what do you think? The little actress, she'd accepted the whole six of us the same way she had me!"

At this point the girl from New Hampshire, who had been listening seriously, broke into a shout of delight and laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks. She checked herself for an instant to ejaculate: "Talk about poetic justice!" and then went off into another peal. Finally, still shaking with mirth, her handkerchief at her eyes, she inquired: "What happened to your 'wife'?"

The cadet helped himself to a large chocolate-drop. "It was the funniest thing about him! We were all so sort o' weak and shaken by our scare and the sudden relief, that we never thought to take it out on him! Blessed if he didn't get off scot-free! But the next time Helen came to the Point"—here there was a pause as he thoughtfully finished the chocolate-drop—"well, on the whole, I reckon I'd better not tell you about the next time Helen came to the Point!"



## AFTERMATH

**MADGE**—I made quite an impression at the reception, didn't I? Everybody seemed to be talking about me.

**MARJORIE**—They talked about you more after you left.

July 1904

## A MOWING SONG

SWING and sway in rhythmic measure,  
 Kings might envy us our pleasure,  
 Mowing is but play;  
 Far the golden grain is sweeping,  
 Slowly to the west is creeping  
 The rich-freighted day;  
 Then swing and sway.

Swing and sway, no stroke abating,  
 Other harvest-fields are waiting,  
 Onward! do not stay;  
 Joyous blood each vein is filling,  
 Action every nerve is thrilling,  
 Labor is but play;  
 Then swing and sway.

Swing and sway—beneath our scything  
 Like a foe the grain is writhing—  
 Conquer while we may!  
 Hour by hour the shadows lengthen,  
 Every muscle now must strengthen,  
 Swiftly flies the day;  
 Then swing and sway.

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH WELLS.



## AN EYE TO BUSINESS

BRIGGS—I saw the name of that clairvoyant in the papers, and consulted her.  
 GRIGGS—Was she very good?  
 “She was a good advertising medium.”



## ONE BETTER

FIRST BOY—We’ve got a new attachment on our piano.  
 SECOND BOY—That’s nothing! We’ve got one on our house.

# THE SUICIDE

By Agnes Russell Weekes

**A** LONG the dark corridor, lighted by electric lights, Aubourg swung at a rapid pace, walking with the lazily graceful, catlike tread which marked a strain of Italian blood in him, and carrying in his hand the packet which he had just gone out to purchase. Closed doors on either side kept their secrets; the mysterious teeming life of a great hotel moved invisible around him, but Aubourg evidently saw nothing of it. His dark, fine, Norman features had the look of preoccupied and half-melancholy recklessness which is found in the old portraits of dead and gone cavaliers.

Gaining the end of the corridor and opening the last door on the right, he was surprised to find his room in darkness. He tried to find his way to the mantelpiece, but he had not taken three steps when he blundered against a chair; then, turning quickly to avoid it, he struck against the table, and a crash of splintered glass told him that he had knocked off some small article which his memory refused to identify. With a muttered exclamation of impatience, Aubourg retraced his steps to the door, and switched on the electric light. Its cold, dazzling stare revealed a large, shabby room, an iron bedstead with a threadbare blue canopy, and a cheap and scanty set of furniture. A leather portmanteau, marked with the initials "C. H.," stood beside the washstand; and on a circular table in the middle of the room stood an empty bottle of Bass's, a clay pipe, and a tobacco pouch, flanked by a litter of foreign newspapers and railway guides and Eng-

lish books and magazines. On the floor lay the fragments of a broken tumbler. Nothing could have made a sharper contrast with the luxurious trimness of Aubourg's own apartment. It was like a glimpse of another man's private life, and Aubourg, who was sick of his own, felt the attraction of this bohemian interior, thus caught at unawares and bare to his curiosity.

"At all events, I must pick up his tumbler for him," he thought, moving toward the table, "and I owe him an apology for breaking it. I suppose I've come up a story too high."

He picked up the fragments carefully, and stood looking down at the table. A letter lay on its oilcloth cover, addressed in a woman's hand to "Cecil Hurst, Esq., Hôtel Russe, Bruxelles, Belgique." Aubourg fingered it doubtfully, but laid it down again. After all, not even the white packet that he carried in his hand could release him from that elementary obligation. He did not scruple, however, to take up the book that lay face downward by the letter, and glance through the first lines that caught his eye.

*"But now the King of Terrors comes, overshadowing flesh and spirit with the vague, with the illimitable darkness of His wings: and while His power is upon us, the power and the fashion of this world are changed. Who fears Death instant, has no room to fear pain, or night, or judgment, or the phantasmagoria of an imaginary hell, which pass away and are absorbed by His omnipotent and annihilating stroke. . . ."*

"Just tell me what you're doing here, will you?" said a level and

commonplace voice from the threshold. "My name's Cecil Hurst, and this room's mine. If you've stolen anything, you'd better put it back quick—*sabe?*"

Aubourg put down the book and turned round. Light-blue eyes regarded his quizzically out of a broad, fair, ugly face; the broad, calm figure, clad in a ready-made suit and a flannel shirt, gave a remarkable impression of elasticity. Watchful and smiling, he stood with a hand in his hip-pocket, his body bent forward, ready to spring; Aubourg set him down at once for a good boxer and fencer, light of his feet and light of his hands, and, probably, also ready with his revolver.

"Don't fire," he said, laughing. "I came blundering in here in the dark by mistake for my own room, and—I have to apologize." He indicated the neat little heap of fragments.

"I see," said Hurst, but with a doubtful inflection. He shut the door and came up to the table, to Aubourg's side. "I suppose you like De Quincey," he said.

"Do you mind? Of course, I fully recognize that I had no business to look at it," said Aubourg, laughing again, but embarrassed by the consciousness that he was being subjected to a narrow and critical examination. "I can only apologize for an unwilling intrusion." He turned to go, momentarily forgetting his packet, which was lying on the table. Hurst held it out to him.

"You've forgotten something," he said. "Ah!" His keen eye had caught sight of the label on the packet.

"Give that to me," said Aubourg, sharply.

"Wait a bit," said Hurst. "What are you doing with stuff marked '*Poison*,' Harry Aubourg?"

"It's a lie!" said Aubourg, furiously. "Give it here to me."

"I never lie. Don't you know your photograph's in all the papers? I knew you the minute I got inside the room."

Aubourg colored deeply. "I forgot that," he said. "Yes, I'm Harry Au-

bourg, who was broke for drunkenness on parade. All my people are in the Service, and I've got neither money, nor work—nor self-respect. Now, will you have the goodness to hand me over that packet?"

"Lord! you poor fool!" said Hurst, pityingly. He was evidently not shocked, and Aubourg was astonished to find what balm to his pride those words of simple comradeship conveyed.

"What on earth made you do it? You're not built for a sot."

"Hereditry."

"Ah! Seems a pity, doesn't it? And I know you want to chuck the whole concern. Well, this world's good enough for me; but tastes differ."

"And circumstances differ, also; it is too good for me."

"Suicide on the atonement theory? That's rather played out, you know."

Aubourg made for the door. "If you preach, I'm off," he said. "And if you won't give me back my own property I shall go straight to the nearest chemist and buy some more."

"And suppose I toddle after you and give you in charge before you get there?"

"I should do it all the same, sooner or later. You couldn't stop me; you would only make me appear rather ridiculous. No one can prevent a man from killing himself, if he's desperate and resolute, and carries a purse."

"So your mind's made up? I see. Don't go; I'm not a preacher; besides, I couldn't convert you if I were. You're too hard a case for me."

"How well you see my point of view!" said Aubourg, laughing outright as he dropped into an arm-chair.

"When I've smoked my cigar, I throw away the butt-end. Now, you say you've smoked your cigar, metaphorically speaking." Hurst waved his plump hand.

"Evidently, you're a philosopher of an unusually practical type."

"I? I'm a journalist, and I believe in letting folks manage their own business; besides, I guess I couldn't do any good, however hard I tried. Let's see how you mean to work the racket."



He stood in the centre of the room, holding up the packet between both hands so that the light fell on the printed slip of directions. Aubourg gazed up at him, feeling himself in the presence of a problem. He was not the first man, or woman, either, that had been provoked, and then baffled, by the calm, ugly, humorous face, the sleepy eyes, and the solid, yet wary, figure. Presently, Hurst turned to him, with a queer glance from under his downy eyebrows.

"You're booked for a stormy passage, my friend," he said. "Do you know anything about the properties of salts of baryta?"

Aubourg's high, excitable laugh rang out defiantly. "I do not want an ornamental suicide," he said. "They sha'n't call me a coward."

"They wouldn't, if they knew," said Hurst, drily. "You don't know any chemistry, I take it?"

"A captain in the First Hussars is not expected to know anything about anything."

"Don't sneer at your trade; it's an unhealthy sign. How are you going to take your dose?"

"I haven't the slightest idea! Won't it dissolve in water? That's what I thought of."

"Why don't you think of things beforehand? You cavalry chaps never have a grain of common sense in little jobs like this. You'd better let me mix it for you."

Aubourg's tense features relaxed into a grim smile. "You're pretty cool, I must say," he remarked. "Haven't you any conscience?"

"Seen too many good men die, sonny, to make a fuss about one bad one," Hurst answered, cheerfully.

He strolled across to the washstand, and poured a little water from the carafe into the tumbler. "Mind using this glass? You see, you went and smashed the other one." He rinsed it out carefully, Aubourg all the while watching him with fascinated interest. He felt that Hurst's entire lack of emotion robbed the situation of its dignity, and brought it down to a common-

place and rather vulgar level; he began to think of inquests, of post-mortem examinations, of sensational headlines in half-penny papers.

"You might just see that the door is locked," Hurst said, emptying away the rinsings. "We don't want to be caught by the chambermaid."

Aubourg locked it, then crossed the room and stood by Hurst's side. As much as a tablespoonful of white powder lay at the bottom of the thick, discolored glass. Then, while Hurst poured in the water, Aubourg watched it dissolve, till the tumbler was about half full of a thick, milky-looking fluid. With a lingering movement of mistrust, he looked about for the empty packet, unable to believe that Hurst was actually so criminally complaisant as he seemed. It lay beside the basin, empty.

"Be careful," Hurst said, quickly. "A few grains may be left, and I don't want them knocking about on my washstand, you know."

Aubourg laid the paper down, and went back to his chair. Hurst came and leaned against the mantelpiece, holding the tumbler. "Will you have it now, or sit and think about it for a bit?" he asked.

Aubourg stretched out his hand. "I'll take it now," he said, recklessly. He felt as though he were being pushed over a precipice; and, though his will assented, his body revolted against its fate in an agonized clinging to life which warned him that he must act at once or lose his nerve.

Hurst handed him the glass, not without a pitying glance. "Poor chap!" he said, under his breath. The unrelenting and yet kindly eyes rested on Aubourg's face as he lifted the glass to his lips.

And a moment later Aubourg set the glass down on the table. It was done. In a breath, in the twinkling of an eye, it was over; and life, with its endless chances and incalculable changes, with its shameful falls and glorious resurrections, was exchanged for death, certain, speedy and agonizing. Aubourg had not known, while

the thing was still to do, what it would be like to have done it. The thought, "*I have done what I and all the world cannot undo*," went over him in a creeping shiver of cold.

"Yes, you've done it," Hurst said, guessing and answering the thought. "You've vindicated your pluck—whether you couldn't have vindicated it in some more useful way, is a thing that don't matter much, now. I suppose you wouldn't like me to get a parson, would you?"

"What, to shrive me? Thanks, I'll get along without that."

"One of the best fellows I ever knew was a sky-pilot," said Hurst, with a half-sigh. "He was a man that could talk straight. I believe, if I were dying by inches with my wits about me, I'd like a word with him. But he's dead now, God rest his soul! It's odd to think you may be seeing him to-night."

"Odd!" said Aubourg. "Yes." He shuddered suddenly from head to foot; his face was ghastly white. "I say, will it take long?" he said. "Do you know, Hurst, I think I'm beginning to feel rather queer."

"People generally are pretty queer before they die, you know."

"I suppose so," said Aubourg, laying his head back against the cushions of his chair, and staring in front of him with sickened eyes. "I don't mind the pain. It's the—the—unknown—the unknowable—the blank into which one goes out—I beg your pardon." He pulled himself together and sat up, but his hand trembled. "I am a fool and a cur. I'll die without bothering you, if I can."

"Don't worry yourself," said Hurst. "It isn't your dying that bothers me so much as what I shall do with your body when you're dead."

"Do with my body?"

"I don't want to figure as the notorious Brussels poisoner, you know. I'll have to drag you into the smoking-room, I expect; it's only just across the passage, and there's never anybody in it."

"Why the smoking-room?"

"Because I couldn't get you downstairs to your bedroom. For one thing you're heavy, and for another I might meet somebody. But I dare say I could get you across the passage and drop you on the sofa. I'm pretty strong. I expect I could get you up over my shoulder."

"Good God! how can you say such beastly things?" Aubourg cried, with another violent shudder.

"You think I'm revolting and loathsome? So's death."

"And am I really going to die? Oh, Hurst! the life is so strong in me, I can't believe it."

"The strongest man that ever lived, if he took that dose of baryta, would be dead in a couple of hours."

"Two hours of this agony!" Aubourg exclaimed. He got up and began to pace up and down the room. Hurst leaned against the chimney-piece and watched him, impassive and kindly, a beneficent, but inexplicable, force.

"I thought you wanted to die?" he said. "You were drunk on parade, you know."

"Yes, shamefully drunk—and it's in the blood! Only——"

"Pity you couldn't have found something to do, some way of patching up the mischief," said Hurst, reflectively. "You're pretty young, ain't you?"

"Thirty."

"Forty years more of this good and bad old world! Why, I've known a man cure himself that had been at it longer than you have, and his was a case of heredity, too. Never tell me! It's all a question of will power. I suppose you're not a religious man, by any chance? You don't happen to believe in a judgment to come?"

"Judgment!" exclaimed Aubourg, sharply. "No! If I did——"

"If you did, you feel as if you wouldn't funk dying—is that it? It's the possibility of no judgment, and no God, or heaven, or hell, or life at all after death—that's what you funk, I suppose?—what they call the doctrine of extinction of personality. It is rather a ghostly notion—gets hold of

you and makes you a bit sick and cold, especially when it comes up pretty close."

Aubourg, pacing the room, was more acutely conscious of physical existence than ever before. He drew each breath by a conscious effort, counted the beats of his heart, studied every infinitesimal sensation of his frame as through a microscope, to detect the first symptoms of disease and dissolution. Never had he so known his body, never had it been so dear to him; and never had the problem of the full-stop which death sets to mind and matter confronted him in a shape so close and appalling.

"I wish I were a Christian," he said, putting up his hand to his damp forehead. "I never thought before. How awful to go out! Hurst, do you think——?"

"That there's a God? Certainly. I know there is. I've seen His handiwork." Clear and strong and calm across the agony fell the voice of this peculiar evangelist, who connived at suicide and had seen death too often to be affected by it. "But He's a jealous God, Lord of Hosts. He's not the sort of God that puts up with skulking sentimentalism."

"I could take any punishment, except annihilation."

"Annihilation," I take it, is a big word for what I should call getting broke from God's army. Into the outer darkness, that's where you'll go in about an hour and a half from now—where you won't know, nor be, yourself."

Aubourg fell into a chair. "Don't—don't," he said, putting up his hand. "Give me a chance to die pluckily."

"Die pluckily! A suicide, and he talks of 'dying pluckily'! You don't know what pluck means. You're sick of life, and so you try to shuffle out of it the best way you can. Man, why didn't you get work to do? Disgraced, were you? Dishonored your name? Well, call yourself Smith, or Jones, or Robinson, and go and break stones by the roadside! It's God's roadside, and you enlisted in His army."

"Well, why did you tempt me then?" Aubourg gasped. "Why didn't you say all this before?"

"I did begin, and you tried to march out of the door. I couldn't save you when you wouldn't be saved."

"I beg your pardon; it was altogether my fault. But I was a fool. I didn't realize what death's like in cold blood and at close quarters."

"You *were* a fool, and no mistake. I'd have taken you with me to Morocco, where I'm off for to-morrow, to see the fun, and you could have fought the Arabs and the devil at the same time. How would you have liked that?"

"Taken me with you — me a stranger, and disgraced? I think you said you were a journalist. Are they all like this in your profession?"

"I may be rather unusually moral," said Hurst, with a grin, "but, anyhow, I'll bet I could have brought you home cured in six months' time. And it's wonderful how easy it is to start your life all over again when you're only thirty."

"I might have done it, if I could have held on to you," said Aubourg, simply. "But what's the good of talking? I've only an hour more."

"Ah! don't you wish you had those ten minutes over again? You're not the first suicide, depend upon it, that's seen things in two very different lights—before and after."

"Yes; I do wish it. I was a fool and a coward. But I'm not going to whimper about it, now it's done. Where's the empty packet?"

"On the table. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going down to my own room, to die by myself. If they see me on the bed, and the empty paper lying on the table, they'll guess at once how it happened, and no suspicion can fall on any one else. Besides, I may not be able to control myself—I'd rather die alone. Good-bye, and thanks."

He held out his hand. Hurst took it and held it with a singular, firm gentleness.

"The Lord be praised!" he said,

quietly. "You *have* got the right stuff in you. I knew I was right to do it."

"Do what?"

"You remember I sent you over to lock the door?"

"Yes," said Aubourg. "Why?"

"It was a fraud and a humbug," Hurst explained. "You've had half a tumblerful of precipitated chalk, that's all—stuff you clean your teeth with, don't you know?"

"*Precipitated chalk!*"

"Yes; I did it when your back was turned. First I tipped my tooth-powder into the glass, and then I emptied the salts of baryta into the tooth-powder pot— Hold on a bit, old man, you've had a stiff time of it. I'm so awfully sorry, but I couldn't think of any better way."

The room spun like a top before Aubourg's eyes. Hurst tightened his grip with one hand, and passed his free arm unobtrusively round Aubourg's shoulders.

"Look here, you'd better have something to eat," he said, with the grave smile that made his plain face beautiful; for he was above all things a practical evangelist, and knew when to take himself out of the way. "I'll go down and tell them to send us up a beefsteak and a cut of Roquefort cheese; I can't stand foreign kick-shaws, and so I've taught 'em to cook for me *à l'anglaise*. You just sit down and keep out of mischief, like a good little boy, and think how jolly it'll be when we get off to Morocco together!"



## DEVOTION

AFTER SCHUMANN

THOUGH I were blind, thy face I still should see  
     As last upon thine eyes the lovelight lay;  
     If trembling lips were mute that fain would pray,  
 Though I were dumb, my heart would speak to thee;  
 If snow and flame should seem alike to me,  
     Thy touch would wake its answer in my clay,  
     Though bound in silence, I should hear thee say:  
 "I love thee, Sweet, for all eternity."

Thou art the star within my world of night,  
     Thou art the music I have longed to hear,  
     Thou art my loving speech, that softly stole  
 Upon my lips as dawn upon the sight;  
     Thou art my tenderness—my roses, Dear—  
     I am a woman, and thou art my soul.

MYRTLE REED.



A CAT may look at a king—but then a cat has nine lives.

# CAPABLE MRS. CROLIUS

By Elizabeth Duer

I CLAIM for a short story the right of prelude. It is as pertinent to it as a spout to a teapot or a neck to a bottle, it makes it pour more easily; and so before recounting an exciting episode in the life of Mrs. Jacob P. Crolius, I pause to explain that at the time the story opens she was reaping a belated reward for earlier endurance.

She had married at twenty-five a man of seventy—married in order to gain a larger field for her executive intelligence, and the immediate outcome was to find herself tethered by her ring to a small round of domestic cares.

Her friends said she had married to settle; if so, all she accomplished was the marrying, while old Crolius did the settling. He settled down to a prolonged existence; he settled her activities by bestowing upon her the double function of valet and nurse to himself; he settled how he should spend his own money; and it was not till he had settled in his grave at eighty-two that she found her twelve years of service recompensed by the settling of his entire fortune upon her. If ever a woman deserved a reward for a mean action that woman was Ann Harriet Crolius.

The first effect of independence upon her character was a love of power and a desire to dazzle her friends by her administrative ability. She tolerated no masculine assistance. She attended to her own money affairs, she ran her two houses—one in town—one at Fastgo Park with the executive skill of a naval officer and a major-domo rolled into one. She decided quickly on any course of action, and she prided

herself upon being the exemplar of how immeasurably the capable woman transcends the average man.

So much for the prelude, now for the application.

The story opens at the Fastgo villa on the twenty-fourth of November, just as Mrs. Crolius was wearily going up-stairs to bed after a strenuous day spent in town.

The expedition had been forced upon her partly to prepare for a large house-party invited for Thanksgiving, and partly because she wished with her own hands to take her diamond crescent to Tiffany's to have the setting examined. She had fancied several of the stones insecure, and as they were extremely valuable she desired the opinion of an expert.

As it turned out, the ornament was in perfect order, and she might have saved herself the trouble, but it was something to be reassured, and it was with a feeling of satisfaction that she put the diamonds back in her bag at Tiffany's counter and turned her attention to the next item on her list. She shopped diligently till two o'clock, lunched at a fashionable restaurant, dropped in at her dressmaker's to be tempted with superfluous finery, and caught a late train home.

Behold her now mounting the airy staircase of her country house; a well-preserved woman in the prime of life, impressive—nay more, dignified; her features regular, though somewhat set, her hair dark and obstinately straight, her dress almost too elaborate for comfort.

Waiting for her, just inside her bedroom door, was Timkins, the lady's



maid. She was an English woman about fifty years old, with a turned-up nose, shrewd eyes and gray wavy hair screwed into a knot. Her trim figure rustled in black silk while the somberness was relieved by a jaunty muslin apron with pink bows. She advanced a step toward her mistress, holding out a white-velvet jewel-box ominously void.

"I suppose as you knows, mem, that your creshunt case is empty," she remarked.

"Surely not!" exclaimed Mrs. Crolius in dismay.

"As empty as the chrysalis from which the bird has flew!" said Timkins, who was more of a poet than a naturalist.

"Then," said Mrs. Crolius with decision, "it was taken out at Delgerry's. I thought the waiter was a long time in arranging my jacket and furs over the bag when I sat down to lunch."

"And in my opinion the wool on the unborn lamb ain't innercenter than that man," Timkins declared. "There's them in private houses whose ways needs lookin' after just as much as a poor fellow workin' to bring up his family in a public restaurant."

Mrs. Crolius was no humorist. She saw nothing odd in rearing a family in a public restaurant, but she did see that Timkins was allowing herself a freedom of tongue that could only be overlooked on the score of her fifteen years of faithful service.

"Say plainly what you mean," said Mrs. Crolius.

"I mean," answered the maid, "as I believes that blessed creshunt was taken from its case when I stepped down to the pantry this evening before I had quite finished putting away your things. You see, mem, Middleton and me is friendly, being both English, and he sent one of the footmen up to say as he had a plate of ice-cream and 'alf a glass of champagne waiting for me in the pantry, which is frequent his custom and no more than my dues—and liking my ices froze hard—I left your things till I got back, and away with myself to the pantry"—here her

voice became fateful—"I wasn't gone above 'alf an hour, and when I hentered that door, I saw your bed stripped for the night, and your 'and-bag wasn't where I left it!"

"In other words," Mrs. Crolius, observed, "you neglected your work, and the chambermaid tried to assist you."

"Light fingers makes willing help," said Timkins, with a sniff. "At all events I left your 'and-bag on the bed, and found it on the table, and when I took out your little purchases there was your jool-box wide open and the diamonds gone!"

"I cannot understand it," said the bereaved lady.

"At first," resumed Timkins, "it did not strike me, knowing as how you meant to leave the brooch at Tiffany's to be done over, but afterward, when I had time to turn it hover in my mind, I thought it hodd that you didn't leave the case, too, and I've been that upset I could hardly wait for you to come hup-stairs."

"And on the strength of the chambermaid having moved the bag in order to prepare my bed for the night, you are willing to suspect her of theft? For shame, Timkins!" said Mrs. Crolius, with displeasure.

But Timkins was not easily shamed.

"When ladies employs them Finns, as ain't no more conscience than fishes, they can't expect a dootiful dooty, and so I tell you, mem," and Timkins looked the righteous Briton she was.

"That will do, Timkins!" Mrs. Crolius exclaimed, greatly vexed. "Swedes are not Finns, and you have not the slightest excuse for suspecting this one. I shall advertise for my crescent in all the papers, and, in the meanwhile, I desire you not to speak of the loss."

She dismissed her loquacious abigail for the night, but before going to bed she composed the following notice, to be sent the next day to the newspapers:

Lost in New York on November 24th, somewhere in the shopping district between Tiffany's and Delgerry's or on the 5.30 train to Fastgo Park, a diamond crescent marked A. H. Crolius on the under side. The finder will be liberally rewarded by returning it to Mrs. Crolius, Fastgo Park.

Having accomplished this duty, she at once fell asleep, for she was a person of calm nerves and knew the value of a night's rest. In fact such refreshment to her energies was more than usually necessary, for the next day would see her house-party assembled, and what American hostess can meet such a demand upon her vitality without a sense of strain?

On the second morning—the morning of the twenty-sixth—the metropolitan newspapers proclaimed through the length and breadth of the land that Mrs. Crolius of Fastgo Park had lost a very valuable assortment of diamonds.

It was barely ten o'clock. The ladies of the party had not yet left their rooms, the men had already gone out in quest of sport and a luncheon appetite, and Mrs. Crolius herself was seated among billows of newspapers enjoying the wide-spread diffusion of her notices, when she was summoned to the telephone to receive a communication of so startling a character, that, for a second, she was tempted to seek manly advice. But the habit of self-reliance prevailed; she vindicated the backbone of womanhood; as usual, she met the emergency as her own intelligence dictated.

Middleton, the butler, knocked at the door.

"Would you speak with a person at the telephone, ma'am?" he asked.

Now, Mrs. Crolius abhorred the telephone. To be rung up by anybody at any hour, as if she kept a shop, was an indignity she refused to submit to—and therefore her only telephone was on the main floor in a booth inside the coat closet with a bell which rang in the pantry. Middleton was the person delegated to receive the confidences of the instrument, and when shut in the booth its secrets were secure from eavesdroppers.

"Can't you take the message?" asked Mrs. Crolius, unwilling to be disturbed.

But the butler held his ground. He was a very magnificent person who

had been with her for a year, and made himself respected by a sumptuous vocabulary.

"They refuse an intermediary, madame," he said, stiffly, "and I thought after reading of your loss in the papers"—here a look of wounded pride crossed his face, as at a confidence unkindly withheld—"that the message might have reference to your jools. Something in the nature of *sealed proposals*, ma'am."

Mrs. Crolius recognized the common sense of the suggestion, even though it emanated from a mere man. She allowed herself to be floated down to the lower floor by Middleton in the elevator, and, when he held the door of the coat closet open, she passed through and into the telephone booth.

"You understand the mechanism of the instrument, ma'am?" asked Middleton with an aching curiosity.

She gave a sharp nod, and he withdrew.

"Hello!" said Mrs. Crolius, with the aplomb of an expert—so much will intelligence do for raw material.

"Hello!" answered a voice. "Is this Mrs. A. H. Crolius herself?"

"It is," Mrs. Crolius frankly admitted.

"Can any one overhear you?" asked the voice, sunk almost to a whisper.

"Not possibly," said the lady. "Who are you?"

"We," said the voice, royally, "are the up-town branch of the Search Light Detective Agency. We saw your advertisement in the papers this morning, and we think we can put our hand on the diamonds and the thief. The fact is that a letter found in the pocket of a person we arrested an hour ago, on quite another charge, points to complicity with some one in your employment."

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Crolius, "this is very unfortunate. Which of my people is it?"

But the detective office declined to answer that question for reasons so cogent as to appeal at once to a woman of instructed reason. They explained that the suspected person being under

her roof, any change of manner on her part was to be guarded against.

"But we need your coöperation," the voice went on. "We have known for some time that you have a noted thief in your employment, and, in order to make the arrest, and get the diamonds before they have been disposed of we must act to-day."

He then explained that they proposed sending a man to her villa to watch the servant under suspicion, and make the arrest the moment circumstances warranted his doing so, but for several hours it was very important that no one in her house should guess the real character of the detective except herself. To this end, they begged that she would furnish them with some plausible excuse both for the man's presence, and for his mingling freely with the servants in all parts of the establishment. For example, did she not need an electrician sent from town, or a telephone expert, or a plumber?

Mrs. Crolius was fired with the ambition to prove herself an efficient coadjutor.

"Have you any man capable of playing the gentleman?" she asked. "I am expecting a friend from England—Sir Henry Hone—to visit me in a day or two, but his steamer is not in. My servants know that he is coming, for his rooms have been made ready, but as he is traveling with a servant, you would have to supply a second man to play the part of valet."

It appeared that the suggestion was valued for its astuteness. Two men would work twice as well as one, while the relation of master and servant furnished them with opportunities to consult and compare notes that were most desirable while developing their plot.

A complacent smile tucked in the corners of the widow's mouth. She had yet to find the masculine undertaking that was not illuminated by turning on a side-light of female intelligence.

Before she left the telephone, details had been agreed upon. The Crolius carriage was to meet the late after-

noon train from town. Sir Henry Hone, a middle-aged English gentleman, and his servant were to be received at the Fastgo villa.

At the lunch-table, Mrs. Crolius announced the impending arrival to the house-party. Middleton, who was serving lunch, heard the communication, also Farley, the second man, also Robert, who had been buttons and was enjoying his first season as a footman in tails.

Mrs. Crolius tried to control her suspicions in regard to her household, but her mind could not detach itself from the subject. With the exception of her own maid, there was hardly a member of her domestic staff who had not some qualification for the unsavory distinction of "*suspect*." The whole female contingent were Swedes, and Timkins had managed to undermine her lady's confidence in the nation, so that no individual could escape the ban. Then there was Middleton. He had come to her direct from England, bringing the highest references from the housekeeper of one of the great show places of Warwickshire; but she reflected that references were often forged, and English servants rarely expatriate themselves without reason. Added to this, Middleton was sanctimonious; more of the bishop than of the butler!

Mrs. Crolius shrank as he poured her claret into her glass. She turned and looked at him. One of his eyes roved a little—a bad sign. At that moment Farley handed her the potatoes. A decent enough young man was Farley, but a creature of Middleton's selection—found and engaged by him during Mrs. Crolius's Southern trip the previous Spring. For the first time she noticed that his eyes were close together—foxy in expression—and *his thumbs were long*. When next his thumb closed upon her plate—the lady shuddered.

Only Robert was left in the room—ah, well! She did not suspect Robert. He was too dull!

After lunch, the party gathered in the drawing-room, the ladies smoked

their favorite brands of cigarettes, made plans for the afternoon, and the gentlemen rallied Mrs. Crolius upon her industry, for she had spread out a silk bag containing her embroidery, and her jeweled fingers were drawing in and out the tinted silks with a skill that testified to long habit. Her thimble was one of those pretty baubles manufactured for the sake of making a simple thing costly. It was of gold with diamonds, rubies and sapphires thickly studding the rim.

Farley came in with the wood-basket to put logs on the fire. Mrs. Crolius, who occupied a place at the chimney angle, pushed back her chair to make room for him. As she did so, her thimble, which she had just taken off, rolled from her lap and disappeared. Farley looked—everybody looked. The few gentlemen present shook Mrs. Crolius's skirts—respectfully, please understand—while the ladies went down on their knees, and some even put a soft cheek to the floor in order to look across the nap of the rug for the elusive implement. The wood-basket was unpacked, the rug was rolled back—all to no purpose—the thimble was gone as irretrievably as Jonah when swallowed by the whale; perhaps more so, for that conscientious fish appeared to have experienced moral qualms which produced a subsequent upheaval of the property he had attached without assimilating.

Mrs. Crolius took the occurrence coolly. She looked upon it as a link in the chain of events, and, while she assured her guests that the thimble would be found when the room was swept the next morning, she knew in her heart it would be found when the detective laid bare the magpie nest of her household thief.

At half-past five the carriage arrived from the train; its wheels crunched the frozen gravel of the drive so noisily that the sound penetrated the velvet hangings of the library where the solemn rite of afternoon tea was in progress. There was a slight flutter among the ladies, the distinguished guest was there!

Middleton threw open the door and announced:

"SIR HENRY HONE."

Mrs. Crolius looked up sharply, not at the guest but at the butler; his voice had a strange ring that might be mockery or fear, and she thought his eyes sought hers with anxiety.

Sir Henry advanced into the room. He was a slight man with small features, iron-gray hair and short whiskers, and his eyes, of pale green-gray, were like gimlets. His hands were particularly small and well kept, and his clothes were of that rough cloth such as Englishmen much affect when traveling.

Mrs. Crolius's reception of the baronet was an admirable piece of acting; she was cordial without being effusive, and dignified without being cold. She introduced him to her friends with just the right amount of impressiveness, and kept the conversation upon safe topics, not too intimate. Middleton showed a disposition to loiter in the room. He waited to hand Sir Henry his tea, he offered him successively all the dainties of a bread-and-butter variety, and then a choice selection of tea-cakes. He seemed to listen to his accent, and to scrutinize his personal appearance, and while he reconnoitered he kept himself in ambush, standing almost behind the baronet's chair when presenting his tray, and peering at him round tall pieces of furniture; at least, so it struck Mrs. Crolius, who began to fear the Searchlight detectives might be known to Middleton, even if the recognition were not mutual.

In the meantime, Sir Henry threw himself into easy relations with the guests. He was an entirely pleasant person; so ready to be informed, so full of admiration for things American, so deliciously Anglican in the breadth of his *a* and the little catch phrases one associates with the Englishmen of fashion.

The women made a circle round him; they hung upon his words; while the men, dropping in one by one, found him interested in sport and intelligent in his observations. By degrees the



conversation was brought round to a hackneyed subject, the comparative comfort of American and English country houses. Most of the party had been entertained in England, during the Autumn months, and, recalling the damp chill of those visits, had much to say in favor of American methods of heating.

Sir Henry was about to restore Hone Hall, his place in Sussex, and had timed his visit to this country in Winter with the purpose of observing our different modes of heating, and also to learn whether the complicated system of bath-rooms attached to every suite did not lead to trouble from frozen pipes when the mercury dropped below zero.

It seemed very natural that Mrs. Crolius should offer at once to have him shown over the house, and with an inward conviction that the butler was the person he wanted to observe, she rang the bell and desired Middleton to conduct Sir Henry through the kitchens and cellar, as well as over his own pantry and dining-room.

Middleton's reply to this order, of "Very good, ma'am," had a venomous sound, as if he hated to do it, and his stony face grew stonier, but he led the way to the lower regions, and Mrs. Crolius could hear Sir Henry plying him with questions as they disappeared.

She herself intended to act as his guide to the upper part of the house, but he spent so much time below stairs and then in the pantry, that she found it was almost time to dress for dinner when he at last rejoined her. His eagerness to continue his tour was so great, however, that she determined to gratify him even if dinner were slightly delayed in consequence.

"Not go over the bedrooms!" he exclaimed. "My dear Mrs. Crolius, it is the bedrooms that excite my deepest interest."

She led the way first to the servants' wing, and finding herself alone with him in the corridor, she begged that he would at least confide in her. But it appeared that was just what

he did not mean to do; he was inclined to think there was more than one person involved, and absolute secrecy was the best chance of success. A turn in the passageway brought them to the room of a Swedish scullion. The door was half open, and, as they approached, they saw the woman on her knees putting something in her trunk. At the rustle of the lady's skirts, the servant turned her head, gave a little scream, and rushing to the door banged it rudely in their faces. To be sure, modesty may have prompted the action, for the woman was in her petticoats, but the detective must have felt it significant, for he wagged his head sapiently, and seemed to note the position of the room. He made an especial point of examining the rooms of the men-servants, and, in Middleton's, he opened the window, and seemed to measure the distance to the ground—asked how it faced and what was below, tried the closet door, and murmured, "I thought so!" when he found it locked. So much time had now elapsed that most of the guests were dressing, and their rooms were closed to inspection.

Sir Henry's own door stood open. His apartment was brilliantly lighted, and his servant was busy laying out his evening clothes. Mrs. Crolius spoke to the man as she passed, and his manner of answering was so discourteous that she whispered her regrets to her companion that he should have selected such a stupid person to play valet. She feared it might excite comment among her servants, and stir up the very distrust he wished to allay.

The pseudo Sir Henry smiled, disagreeably.

"Really, madame," he said, "we do not keep a stock company of finished actors to draw upon at such short notice. My pal will do his part well enough when the time comes."

Mrs. Crolius felt she had been hypercritical.

There was nothing now open to inspection except the lady's own bed-



room with its bath and dress-closets beyond.

The detective made her show him just where Timkins had left her bag, and where she found it, asked for the empty case of the crescent, and said plainly that a person keeping valuable jewels, especially in the country, should have a safe. It was with some pride that Mrs. Crolius raised the cover from a piece of furniture near her fireplace and displayed the iron door of a safe.

"Have you ever found any indication of the lock having been tampered with, or of an impression taken in wax?" he asked.

"Never," she answered. "I always wear the key round my neck, and it works with perfect smoothness. I'm afraid I must suggest your getting ready for dinner," she added, and, dismissing Sir Henry, she rang for Timkins.

Several times she had encountered Middleton since they emerged from the servants' part of the house, and each time he had murmured, "I crave a word in private with you, ma'am," but Sir Henry flashed a look of such sharp disapproval that each time she had put him off with the excuse that she was busy and could not attend to him.

But the moment Sir Henry was shut in his room, and before Timkins could respond to her call, Middleton knocked at her door.

"Madame, oh, madame!" he exclaimed, forgetting the restraints due from a self-respecting servant to his employer, "why didn't you listen to me before? That person you are entertaining ain't no more Sir Henry Hone than I am. I've seen the real Sir Henry frequent in England, and there ain't a pint of resemblance between them. I thought he might have brought you letters without you having ever set eyes on him, and you ought to know as he is an imposture. The whole thing is suspicious, and I advise you to let me turn him out before we're all murdered in our beds!"

Mrs. Crolius experienced a revulsion

of feeling in regard to her butler. She was sorry she had doubted his honesty, she believed in the uprightness of his intentions. She sincerely regretted that she could not tell him the plain truth. She tried, however, to put as much meaning as possible into her reply.

"What you tell me is no news, Middleton. I happen to know *who* the gentleman is better than you do. All you have to do is *to let the law take its course!*" Seven nods emphasized these words, and her voice was mysterious.

Middleton's expression ran through a series of dissolving views. First astonishment, then plain doubt, and then overmastering esteem. He breathed a sigh of relief that was almost a whistle.

"You'll excuse me, ma'am"—with a burst of admiration—"but if you haven't the coolest hand and the longest head ever attached to a female anatomy my name ain't John Middleton. I'll aid you all I can, ma'am, you can count on me—and there ain't no time to lose neither. Is it New York or Fastgo police you're in communication with?"

"New York," she answered, rather bewildered by his rapid grasp of the situation, and yet not wishing to say anything more before Timkins, who had just appeared.

"We ought to have the Fastgo people on the lookout as well," murmured Middleton, and dashed downstairs to the telephone, leaving his mistress in a sad state of perplexity as to how much he knew.

At dinner, that evening, Sir Henry was even more engaging than he had been at tea time. He drank very sparingly himself, but, after the ladies left the table, his stories of strange experiences, of adventures, even of crimes were so thrilling that the men lingered over their cigars till twice the usual amount of old Crolius's 1850 brandy had been consumed, and a suggestion of bridge, that followed their return to the drawing-room, met with a reception so apathetic that only

one table was started, and that by four ladies. Half-past eleven found the party separating for the night.

As Sir Henry shook hands with his hostess, she managed to whisper: "If you mean to act to-night, you can rely on my butler for assistance."

And he had answered: "An admirable suggestion. I shall probably need him and you, too."

Mrs. Crolius looked a little dashed. No one should impugn her courage, but she was sorry her actual presence was necessary at the arrest. The events of the day had tried her nerves, and she longed passionately for a night's rest before facing any more shocks.

Such being her state of mind, it was particularly trying to find Timkins preparing her toilette for the night with a "come-to-judgment" air it was impossible to ignore. That redoubtable person rattled the brushes, and shook out her lady's dressing-gown as if she wished the stately figure were already inside it to share the shaking.

It was plainly an occasion when Mrs. Crolius had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. To others she might pose as a calm intelligence, a dominant spirit, a social power, but to Timkins she was no more than an erring woman, the dupe of her own servants and the victim of an overweening self-conceit. To the all-pervading eye of inside knowledge such attributes are as readily stripped off as a satin evening-dress, and the underlying femininity remains but a creature of corsets and garters. And then, again, Timkins was no time-server. She passed on unpleasant truth as it was revealed to her, and to-night the truth required exposition on the text of Sir Henry Hone's valet.

"There be some gentlemen's gentlemen staying in this house as might better 'ave been left at 'ome," she began, as she removed the ornamental combs from Mrs. Crolius's head, "because, in my opinion, they ain't accustomed to their business. Middleton was just saying that it's all very well to lend a hand in the pantry at

washing hup—even if his uncultured ways does snap five straw-stems and the neck of the best decanter—but when it comes to snoopin' in bedrooms as doesn't belong to his party—that ain't the kind of valet we're used to."

"The man may be untrained," agreed Mrs. Crolius, "but I happen to know he is quite trustworthy."

"Well, he can save himself the pains," Timkins snorted, "for nobody trusts him. There's Middleton means to guard the silver safe in the pantry hall night, tired as he is, with such folks about!"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Crolius.

"It's easy saying 'nonsense,' mem, and it's easier to see a pair of knaves has pulled the wool over your heyes, and so I tell you, Mrs. Crolius!"

The lady whisked her head from the hands of her abigail, and faced her in wrath.

"You tell me a great deal, Timkins, that is extremely impertinent and improper, and the fact that I have passed over your bad manners again and again for the sake of old times does not mean that I shall do so forever."

"Oh! very well, mem," said Timkins, "perhaps you had better fill my place. There's no stint of mealy-mouthed maids going the rounds of the intelligence offices that will give you heye-service for your money."

"That will do, Timkins," Mrs. Crolius answered, with dignity; "when I need advice I will ask for it."

Timkins put wood on the fire, gathered up her lady's dress and left the room, omitting to say good night.

To await a tragedy is not inducive to sleep, and Mrs. Crolius, with all her fatigue, felt excited and overwrought, and determined to pass the night in her easy-chair by the fire. The ominous insinuation of the detective that he might need her before morning, braced her to wakefulness. If the news of an arrest had to be announced in the watches of the night, at least she wouldn't have to be summoned back from dreamland to meet it. Timkins had unconsciously given her a drop of comfort in saying that Middle-

ton meant to stay on guard on the ground floor. It was pleasant to know that one of her own people, as well as the detectives, was sharing her vigil.

She set her door open on a crack, moved the electric light to the best advantage for reading, and forced her attention to follow the pages of a new novel. At the end of half an hour, she was able to read without effort, and even began to feel a lively interest in the sorrows of the heroine. At the end of an hour, she began to feel drowsy, and rested her head against the padded side of her chair. She was hardly dozing, hardly more than floating through the debatable land, when she bounded from her chair and then sank back, every sense strained to attention.

Her bedroom was over the dining-room and her bath-room over the pantry, and, coming from below, she thought she heard the shuffling of feet, a cry, and a heavy fall.

Then they had been obliged to resort to force! She had hoped three men might have arrested one thief without personal violence. But, after all, what did she know about it? The criminal might have outside accomplices—perhaps Sir Henry was not in that part of the house—perhaps Middleton had been overpowered or even killed! The noise certainly came from the vicinity of the silver safe. Her heart beat to suffocation, and, when she tried to cross the room in order to ring for help, her knees failed her, as in a nightmare, and she sat paralyzed for the moment.

It was at this juncture that her door opened cautiously and three men marched into the room. Did her eyes deceive her! Was the gagged, bound creature who the two detectives were covering with their revolvers, Middleton? His hands were corded behind his back, and the wooden gag in his mouth was supplemented by a pantry towel.

Mrs. Crolius made a superhuman effort to be calm. She was naturally a courageous woman, and her first en-

ergies were devoted to trying to understand this strange turn of affairs and why Middleton should be forced into her presence. She felt angry and outraged, but held judgment in suspense till an explanation could be offered. The head detective shut the door; Mrs. Crolius fancied he shot the bolt, but she could not be sure. The circumstance was peculiar enough to frighten her, especially as Middleton, catching her eye, rolled his to the ceiling as one who calls heaven to witness his innocence.

"Why have you gagged the butler?" Mrs. Crolius asked. "I told you he was well disposed."

The Sir Henry detective advanced to her chair while the other continued to cover Middleton with his pistol.

"My dear madame," said Sir Henry, "your assurance is not worth as much as our observation. The man was engaged in taking silver out of the safe and handing it to a confederate outside the pantry window when we came upon him; and a good fight he made, too! This has probably been going on for a long time, and he has had the wit only to steal the pieces not in ordinary use. We gagged and bound him because any outcry would wake the household, and we think we have another arrest to make."

"But why bring him here?" asked the resentful lady.

"We didn't dare leave him, and we must get you to identify some of your property found on his person," said Sir Henry, clearing a space on the table beside her as if he meant to set out an array of treasures.

"Allow me," he said, stepping behind her chair to adjust the lamp, and, as she turned her head, a gag was pressed against her lips while a pair of torturing thumbs were screwed into the muscles of her jaws, and forced her mouth open. The whole thing was so agonizing and unexpected that she had neither time nor spirit to fight for her liberty, and, in a moment, her hands were bound behind her, as securely as Middleton's. Her tormentor motioned to his assistant for more rope,

and proceeded to tie his prisoner in her chair, which was exceedingly heavy and hard to move.

Being once more free to pursue his plans, he took from her neck the key of the jewel-safe, and, to her intense mortification, she had to watch the accumulated treasures of a lifetime transferred to his pockets. The velvet-lined shelves, and the secret drawers were rifled of their necklaces and tiaras and pendants, and, when finally her string of pearls was thrust into his pocket, the tears streamed from her eyes.

Sir Henry rose to his feet; there remained but one thing to do, namely to deprive Middleton of the liberty to wander through the house and give the alarm, for, although his hands were tied, he could yet administer kicks that would rouse the soundest sleeper. By a happy inspiration, they seated him on top of the empty safe, and bound him to that with his back against the wall.

This accomplished, Sir Henry approached Mrs. Crolius. He hung the key of the jewel-safe round her neck with the ceremony of a sovereign bestowing the order of the "Golden Fleece," and, in a whisper, he thanked her for her hospitality, which he pronounced princely and of a kind that suited him down to the ground. He next advised her, if she valued her life, not to make any outcry, even if she or the butler should manage to get free before the night was over. He even added pleasantly that he didn't know anything about her crescent, but her advertisement had attracted his attention as a thing worth working up, because a lady who owned one diamond ornament was likely to own more, and Fastgo Park was the haunt of the rich.

"Good-bye, madame," he concluded. "If I have deprived you of a few valuables, I have furnished you with an experience worth its weight in gold." He made a deep bow, unlocked the door, and, followed by his companion, disappeared.

The two dumb tenants of the room looked at each other. Middleton's

position on the safe was to the right of the fireplace with his back to the wall; Mrs. Crolius faced the fire, a little to the left. The butler's eyes rolled reproach—and before their mute accusation the lady's quailed—in fact, there was a lilt to her brows that bespoke humility.

Five minutes passed, and Middleton had an inspiration. The electric button of Timkins's bell was situated directly behind his hands, and had been overlooked by the thieves, probably because a table-cloth, which usually concealed the safe, had been hastily tossed on top when Sir Henry applied the key to the lock. Middleton wriggled his whole body till a finger came in contact with the button, and then he pressed it with a will.

In the stillness of the night, they could hear the distant tinkle, piercing and persistent, that was to summon their liberator, and finally she came, picturesquely attired in a frilled nightgown with her hair in papers.

"Well, is the house on fire," she began, crossly, before she got into the room; but at that moment she caught sight of Mrs. Crolius and Middleton with their muffled jaws, and screech after screech rent the air.

In an instant, the whole house seemed awake. The door-bell rang, voices sounded down-stairs, bedroom doors opened, every one was dashing about the corridors, and the head constable of Fastgo entered with two of his men.

"We have caught your burglars, Mrs. Crolius," he said, as he cut loose her bonds, "but they gave us a sharp chase. Your butler here—Middleton—put us onto the business before eight o'clock; he said he believed there was thieves in the house; and we had men stationed all over the place."

Magnanimous Middleton! Though the Fastgo policemen had by this time set free his jaws, not one word of triumph escaped him; in fact his first articulation showed the true sporting spirit.

"Where did you bag 'em?"

The constable, nothing loath to



vaunt his own prowess, went on with the tale.

"The fellows had a trunk of silver lashed on top of a couple of bicycles——"

Here Middleton interrupted—

"They was packin' that trunk when I surprised 'em in the pantry, and they nearly choked me unconscious!"

"You never see a neater rig than them two bicycles——" pursued the constable.

But Middleton again broke in with—"Bet yer boots, they was mine and Farley's!"

The constable lost patience at such persistent diversion of the narrative from its central interest, and marked his displeasure by addressing himself exclusively to Mrs. Crolius.

"They was trundling their trunk off, down the back road, when we closed in upon 'em, and as soon as they seen we was too many for 'em, they left the whole biz'ness and took to their heels, but we got 'em all the same, and now they're locked up in the station-house safe as rats in a trap, and I guess you won't find a jool missing."

As the head of the Fastgo police finished his account of his successful guardianship, he freed Mrs. Crolius of the last cord that bound her to her chair, and the emancipated lady stood upright—but, alas! only for a moment. Whether the return of an interrupted circulation made her faint, or whether she was in a state of collapse, like Mr. F. C. Burnand's immortal peddler with the conceit taken out of him, I do not know, but certain it is, that she sank to the floor, as feminine a wreck as if she had never been sustained by a supermasculine intelligence.

They laid her in her bed, and there she stayed for a week. The familiar words, *nervous shock, complete prostration*, explained her condition to her guests, who were not slow in taking their departure.

They belonged to the leisure class themselves, and appreciated the necessity of succumbing at once to neurotic strain.

Timkins ministered to her lady with kindness qualified by half-veiled contempt. Spurned advice requires more vindication than what is furnished by the mute testimony of events, and she longed for such words as, "If I had listened to you, Timkins!" but nothing seemed further from Mrs. Crolius's thoughts.

The first day the lady sat up, Timkins took from her closet the identical house-gown she had worn at lunch the day the thimble disappeared, and from some shirring on the skirt the lost implement fell, and rolled across the floor.

"I suppose, mem," said Timkins, as she restored it to the work-bag, "that maybe you might like to tell Farley yourself as your thimble is found. It hurts a young man's pride terrible to be suspected of theft."

"I never accused him of taking it, or anything else—how can you say such things, Timkins?" remonstrated Mrs. Crolius.

"It ain't only the tongue that accuses, mem," returned Timkins. "You've a very cuttin' eye, and servants has their feelings!"

Mrs. Crolius was hardly strong enough to resent the imputation, and, besides, in the depth of her heart she knew she had suspected Farley, and so she only sighed and allowed Timkins to score a point.

Returning health, however, brought back her fighting spirit, and that just in the nick of time.

The day after the return of the thimble, Timkins found time to go over her lady's shelves and drawers, and for the first time smoothed out some veils Mrs. Crolius had bought during her momentous visit to town. The veils were of an expansive and springy nature, and must have burst their enshrouding paper inside the hand-bag, for as Timkins lifted them up—out dropped the crescent!

"Here's your creshunt, mem!" said Timkins, without turning a hair.

"What! Where? How abominable!" cried Mrs. Crolius all in one breath. "Then all this confusion might have been saved!"



"So I think, mem," said Timkins, primly. "I was saying to Middleton only yesterday, after the thimble turned up, that it was hard to see strangers trusted and faithful servants treated as thieves."

But Mrs. Crolius was herself again.

"Be silent, Timkins!" she said, with flashing eyes. "I should think you would be ashamed to say such things when you yourself started all the trouble by your carelessness. If you had properly unpacked my hand-bag when I returned from town you would have found the crescent, instead of leaving my things lying about for any outsider to pry into while you went to the pantry to eat ice-cream. You may also remember that when I felt sure the diamonds had been stolen at Delgerry's it was

*you* who made insinuations against the Swedes in my employment. I have no patience with you!"

"As I said before, mem," said Timkins, sniffing, "perhaps you can find some one to serve you better."

"Perhaps I can," said Mrs. Crolius, "indeed, I think it more than likely, though I am attached to you and make allowances—but I doubt whether you could ever find a lady willing to put up with your tongue."

It is well known that plain speaking breaks no bones. At the end of a week, this intrepid mistress and maid had so entirely regained their complacent view of their own characteristics that the instructive incidents just related left not so much as a trace on their subsequent conduct.



## WHEN PEGGY PLAYS

WHEN Peggy plays, with matchless ease  
 Slim hands caress the trembling keys,  
 And be the theme some sweet romance,  
 Love's cherubim join in a dance,  
 While blissful dreams the fancy seize;

The senses float on perfumed breeze  
 O'er flower-flecked fields and sun-kissed seas—  
 The firelight glints on Cupid's lance  
 When Peggy plays!

Oh, pray sweet Peggy's mood agrees  
 That she may linger there to please!  
 While I embrace the lucky chance  
 To ogle Peggy's sister Nance,  
 And steal a kiss that no one sees  
 When Peggy plays.

HERBERT GRISSOM.



MANY a woman will sacrifice anything for the sake of her complexion—including her complexion.

# DENIS READ'S COUP D'ÉTAT

By Seumas MacManus

THE drift of the discourse had run upon newspapers, and upon the startling progress of newspaper enterprise in modern days.

The docthor just lay back, looked up at the ceiling, and rolled his eyes, and simply said: "Hagh!"

"Why, docthor," said Moloney, "do you mean to dispute the fact?" For it was patent to every one at the table that the tone of the docthor's remark was one of utter incredulity.

"I dispute nothing, Moloney," said the docthor. "I know little about your enterprise in modern days, and with all respect to you, sir, I care less. But God be with the good ould times! I will assert that they were not without their share of enterprise—let you degenerate moderns drone as you please.

"I have seen men," said he, "make martyrs of themselves, and their prospects, in the cause of newspaper enterprise in them days; and there was deuced little thought of it, and darned less heard. But now, if a newspaper man is started out of bed before the hot water is quite ready, or if he sacrifices a brandy-and-soda in the cause of newspaper enterprise, the country clangs with it, the world hoists him on its shoulders, and the deed is recorded in history. So, 'tis my opinion, lads—and you's may give it what weight ye may—that 'tis not the fact of there being more enterprise now, but rather the fact that there is a hundred times more noise made over it which is deceiving you's, one and all.

"Now, there was my ould and valued friend of them days long ago—Denis Read—and his was a case in

point; and if you pass the port, Kavanagh," says the docthor, says he, "I'll give you's the story."

And Kavanagh passed the port with little delay and no words, for the docthor never required verbal encouragement.

"Well, this Denis, boys, was a singular man. He was as gay as a lark, could drink like a fish, and was as good-natured a sowl—God bless him!—as ever broke bread; and would have halved the last penny, if he had it, with the next man he met on the road, be he in distress or otherwise.

"Poor Denis, innocent sowl that he was, never took thought for the morrow; for it was his theory that no man ever yet was in rale want but if he opened his mouth God would drop something into it; and consequently, upon the twelve or fifteen shillings a week that he earned, at irregular intervals, he reveled and caroused, and lived luxuriously, feeding, in the main, on liquid food, and casting what was over to the four winds, for he never, in all his days, hoarded a ha'penny against the time of distress. As often as there is fingers and toes on me, he told meself that if he put a half-crown in his waistcoat pocket, and kept it there an hour, it would burn a hole and find its way out by hook or by crook. 'If money was not made to spend,' says he, 'I would like to meet the philosopher that would tell me the design of it.'

"Denis, God bless him! used to often say to me that his aim and ideal was to be as the lilies of the field. But the Lord knows, I suppose poor Denis, like many's another of us, fell

often short of his ideal—in some ways, at least—*exempli gratia*—in dhrinkin' more dew than was good for him, and I didn't forget to hint this to him myself.

"No matter, Denis was the broth of a boy; and the heart and soul of a whole good fellow; and the very superfluity of good-nature with which he would take ye in for a treat, and borrow your last half-crown to pay for it over the bar, would win your soul to him, if you had ever had any doubts as to its disposition.

"He called himself a journeyman journalist, and indeed he could not have named himself neater if he had searched the dictionary with a fine comb. For he had tramped further, worked upon more papers in Ireland, or, as he himself put it, drunk upon more dailies and weeklies, than any ten men of his trade betwixt the four corners of the Kingdom. Indeed, he used to boast that in all of Ireland, during his term of journalism, there were only three papers he had never jobbed upon; and two of these, he said, were still-born, and the other was sickly from its youth upward and would never be heard of, anyhow. So he used to assure his friends that if an eagle lifted one of them up, and carried him, and dropped him through the roof of any newspaper office in the land, he had only to recollect to mention the name of Denis Read, and he would get half-a-crown, instantly, to carry him as far as the next newspaper. I suppose this was true, and we took his word for it, but none of his friends ever put it to the test.

"It is probable, boys, that you's may already have got the prejudice that poor Denis had one little bit of a failing—and, indeed, there you's aren't far astray. He's dead now, and, may the Lord be merciful to him, gone to a better world, let us hope, and '*de mortuis nil nisi*,' and so forth—you's know the rest. But notwithstanding, it is not a bit harm to say—for, goodness knows, it has been many a good man's case—that the only one little failing in the world, if it be a failing,

which poor Denis Read had, was, that he loved the glass, not wisely but too well; and, at too frequent intervals, looked upon the whiskey when it was all the colors of the rainbow. However, there is no cloud without its silver lining; and Denis's case was not so desperate but that he could reform, and, to his credit be it said, did reform, very many times. As a rule and regular thing, he reformed twice a week. But on some occasions he doubled his record; though there were times—rare ones—when his lapses were so permanent, and his strength of mind so conspicuous by its absence that he would go unreformed for a month. But the reform was exceptionally permanent on occasions when he had spent all his cash, and likewise that of his friends.

"Now, I loved Denis Read for all his good qualities, and esteemed him, and would have liked to see him well and doing well; and, as I had many young journalist friends in different corners of the country, I got him many's the post; and got him posts, too, after my patience was often sorely tried with him. But, however it was, no one that knew Denis Read could resist his appeal. And if he had deceived you ninety-nine times, when he would come to you again, and plead, and tell you that this time, surely, he was going to turn over a new leaf once and for all, you would believe him and trust him the hundredth time—which just prepared the way for the hundred and first trial.

"It might have been the hundredth time, but it may have been the hundred and first—for it is such a long while since, now, and moreover, myself is getting so ancient that my memory is not as distinct as it was on the subject—but, anyhow, this time Denis Read, after I hadn't seen him for more than nine months, come sliding into me one evening, toward nightfall, and he looking the worse of the wear, sure enough.

"'Is that you, Denis, me boy?' says I. 'I would hardly know you.'

"'It's me,' says Denis, says he, 'and

troth you may well say that you'd hardly know me, for I hardly know myself—I'm such a new man,' he added.

"'Faith, and Denis,' says I, 'to talk candid to ye, the new man is rather a disimprovement on the old one.'

"'Yes,' says he, 'from a medical doctor's point of view.'

"'And,' says I, 'from the point of view of what trade or profession under the skies is there an improvement? In the name of wonder, tell me.'

"'From the theologian's point of view,' says he, calmly, 'the improvement is vast; and if you could see me soul,' says he, 'which you cannot, you would acknowledge as much.'

"'Been turning another new leaf, Denis?' says I.

"'Not merely a new leaf,' says Denis, says he, 'but I have turned a whole grove this time.'

"'Then, Denis,' says I, 'my chief apprehension will be for the grove.'

"'And if that's all your bother,' says Denis, 'you may make your mind easy. Denis Read has shaken from off him the shackles; and you now observe before you'—and he struck his breast dramatically—'a freed man.'

"'God grant it,' I said, piously; 'God grant it.'

"'And,' says Denis, 'I want you, Dr. Kilgannon, to help me get upon my feet again.'

"At this myself couldn't help looking at poor Denis's understandings, where the soles, broken and as thin as a sixpence, were parting company with the uppers. 'And,' says I, 'Denis, my boy, if I'm anything of a prophet, you will be on your feet within twenty-four hours, and thanks to nobody.'

"Denis, he followed the direction of my eyes, and he stuck away his feet the next minute under the chair, and he said, 'That's all right, docthor; I don't like reflections upon old friends. I have looked down upon them myself for more months than I mind, but I don't like any one else to do so. And maybe,' says he, 'when yourself has seen the same service, your soul, too, may be as near its departure. However, that's not the point.'

"'Well,' says I, 'what is the point?'

"'The point,' says Denis, says he, 'is, that there is a man wanted as sub-editor, reporter, proof-reader, manager and foreman-printer, in the Derry *Clarion*; and I'm the proper man to fill the posts.'

"'Humph!' says I.

"'And,' says he, not regarding the point of my remark, 'as I am now a new man, and wholly, completely, and teetotally reformed, I know enough of you, docthor, to presume upon our old and lifelong friendship'—here I opened my eyes widely, but the action was lost upon Denis—and to know, that now in the hour of need, you are not the man to renaige me; and one word from you to Mahony will secure me the job, and an independence for life of twelve and sixpence weekly.'

"I only wished in my heart that I could do anything for Denis Read. I didn't cast up to him all the promises he had ever made me, and all the jobs he had gotten through me—and lost through himself; but I did point out to him there was not a bit use in the wide world trying Mahony, for had not he dismissed him no fewer than five times?

"'From which very fact,' says Denis, 'we have every reason to derive good hope. If he had only dismissed me once, or even twice, you would have a plausible reason for your doubts, I don't deny; but, because it has been five times, I'll have every reason to expect that he'll give me the sixth chance.'

"I was going to remonstrate, but Denis closed me up.

"'Docthor Kilgannon,' says he, 'you'll excuse me for differing from you. If the subject were merely a medical one, I would unhesitatingly and hastily bow to your dictum, but not, sir,' said Denis, with an elevation of his head, 'not, sir, on the subject of dismissals. In my acquaintance with that branch of human knowledge I yield to no man.'

"And surely I could not vouchsafe anything less gracious than a silent and respectful bow to this.

"Having got me to concede so much, Denis proceeded with a very plausible tale indeed—and at that same he was never a slow hand—proving to me how complete and thorough was his reformation this time—the last, final and permanent one. And not a bit of myself but he completely won over in small time; and I believed again that Denis had eventually reformed for good and all; and that he was worthy and deserving of a helping hand to get him, as he said, on his feet again. And a helping hand I vowed I'd give him. And he thanked me and blessed me, with what he called the orphan's blessing, which, he assured me, he had never known to fail in its effects yet. And he covered me all over with his gratitude.

"Denis had a bit of supper with me, and in troth he was not without need of it.

"I put him together as well as I could next morning, and hung some of my own half-worn duds on him, and brought him round to the *Clarion* office to Mahony. And when Mahony saw the man I was fetching him, he said that the only reason why he didn't set the dog on us was that he couldn't afford to keep one. But I calmed him, and made him sit down and listen to reason; and after a deal of exciting expostulation on his part, and a deal of wheedling and coaxing and cajoling on mine, and a deal of appeal, promise and protestation on the part of Denis Read, the result was that Mahony consented to take him on ten days' trial.

"And if, during that time,' says he, 'I catch the whiff of spirituous liquors about this office or about your person, or that I ever know you to make the acquaintance of the inside of a public-house, I'll show you the hole the mason made.' Which is to say he would show him the door.

"Poor Denis said his terms and conditions were nothing short of generous; and that, moreover, if inside of ten years, much less ten days, he ever found him introducing a spirituous atmosphere into the office, 'I'll allow

you,' says he, 'to take me head and knock out me own brains with it.'

"And I said, too, that if ever Denis again did touch, taste or handle whiskey, brandy or beer, or become flirtatious with any of the least spirituous of all liquors, I trusted and prayed that the corporation would be induced to bring him out on a barge, and put a necklace of millstones on him, and sink him off Innishowen Head in two-mile deep water, so there might never be any chance of his coming back to disgust poor Ireland with his presence once more. And the fervor with which Denis cried, 'Amen!' to this pious wish of mine, won the favor and the trust of both of us; more than, after the sequel, I would have liked to confess.

"And accordingly, with all trust and hope and faith, Denis Read was formally installed in the office of the *Derry Clarion* where, for the ten days, I am proud to say that he was a credit to the *Clarion*, to me and to himself. And, in all Denis Read's journalistic experiences before, no memory of newspaper man could recall one other such phenomenon.

"And ten days did not limit the length of his reform—nor twenty, nor thirty.

"'Begad, Kilgannon,' says Mahony to me at length, 'I have discovered a very treasure in this Denis Read; and it is you I have to thank for forcing him on me. I am in darned bad need of a holiday,' says he, 'for I have not had one for five years, barrin' two Shrove Tuesdays that I went to Carn-donagh to see the cock-fights. And if Read keeps on as he is doing, and doesn't show any sign of leaving the rails, I am in strong swithers to go to Glasgow, and Edinburgh, and the Scotch Highlands for three weeks. My constitution,' says he, 'can't stand the strain if I don't take a rest, and give it time to pull itself together again.'

"I told Denis, on the first opportunity, what Mahony had been saying; and poor Denis was elated at the very prospect of being left for three weeks at the helm of the *Derry Clarion*—out



of his own head, and by his own right hand, to guide the destinies of the nation.

"And," says Denis, says he, 'tis stake his head on me Mahony may do; and moreover,' says he, 'between ourselves, not to let it go further, you see if I don't make the *Clarion* whizz while he is gone. He'll not know it when he comes back, or my name isn't Denis Read.'

"And faith, my brave Denis meant every word he said.

"For some weeks longer Denis still held as straight as an arrow from a bow. The people were saying that miracles would never cease. Mahony was mightily pleased, and said he believed he could now trust him with the keys of heaven, and that he would go off on his holiday with a light heart and an unburdened conscience.

"And, after giving him loads of advice and cargoes of directions, off he went, sure enough; taking the boat to Glasgow on a Saturday night, and by the middle of the week he was away in the heart of the Scottish Highlands; five-and-fifty miles from everywhere, and a hundred from a post-office.

"Denis was that proud a man, them days, that he would hardly borrow a five-shilling bit from a friend; and when he walked the streets of Derry you would think he was the mayor, and corporation, and harbor commissioners all rolled into one, so big was the strut of him.

"This was the third time in Denis's life that Providence, and a short-sighted editor, had thrown the responsibility of a paper on his hands.

"On the first occasion, which was in Enniskillen, where the people are law-abiding and contentious, he only had the paper swamped in a flood of libel actions, and it never came out of that swamp. And the next, which was in Sligo, where the people are impatient of the law's delays, he was thrown out into the street, and the broken plant thrown on top of him. And, having these two failures before his eyes, Denis was resolved to shine this time. He said the third time was the charm, and

he would make a spoon or spoil a horn, or know the reason why.

"From the hour Mahony skipped to Scotland, Denis had his eye out looking for an opening to distinguish himself. Not long he had to wait; and this is where he found the opening:

"There had come to Derry, only a short time afore, a new curate, with little years and large ambitions, whose chief distinguishing quality was that he lacked a level head. He was fond of fads and new notions; and if he could only dance a horn-pipe on a tight-rope he would do it to distinguish himself.

"He had kept close and sung small while he was still in his first-country parish, but when he was transferred to Derry he got the notion that his pulpit was pitched on top of the earth's axis, and, having the gaze of the world, as he believed, on him, he decided to treat the world to some of his new notions.

"And it was on this Sunday—the very first day after Mahony was gone, that Denis Read—like the good Christian that he now was, making it a point never to be found in bed at twelve o'clock on a Sunday mornin'—was sitting under the new curate, and profiting by a very forceful sermon from him.

"Now, the curate decided that it would be a very popular thing if he would go butting his head against the traditions of the churches, so he conceived the notion of advocating what he termed his 'Broader Christianity.' And, accordingly, on this day, he surprised a good many of the more conservative old members of the congregation by throwing out some pretty plain hints of the new doctrine he was going to preach and teach.

"And Denis, sitting there, with his mind half upon heaven, and half upon copy, was enthused, and saw, too, open before his excited vision, a path which possibly might lead to heaven, but certainly and surely led straight to journalistic glory.

"He was as full of thought that week as he had ever before been full of whiskey; and when the *Clarion*

came out on Friday morning, a deaf man could distinguish the new note that it blew. He had reported the curate's sermon as extensively as he could. He introduced it to his readers with a thundering two-column editorial which dealt with the wonderful progress of religious thought in modern days. He proved and pointed out the necessity for religion keeping pace with the gallop of civilization down the decades of this enlightened nineteenth century. He clapped the new curate on the back up and down the columns. He commended him highly for his depth and breadth of thought, and his bravery in expressing it; and he called on the world at large to open its eyes, from its nine days' blindness, and look at the new light. And Denis, too, having faith in the old saying that 'when a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well,' did not stop at this, but wrote half-a-dozen letters to the editor, beginning 'Sir,' and signed by such old, world-wide favorites as 'Veritas,' 'A Constant Reader,' and 'Pro Bono Publico.' The startling result of it all was that not one less than a grand total of two hundred and thirty-nine copies of the *Clarion* were sold that week. And there was not a man, woman, chick or child in Derry but was sensationed by the new religious departure as expounded by Denis through the columns of the *Clarion*.

"He was as proud as a peacock them days, and would scarcely deign to rub noses with the editor of the biggest daily in the land.

"He knew he had made a grand stroke, and he meant to follow it up and drive it home. And drive it home he did, sure enough, in the next week's issue, over the face of which was written large, 'The Broader Christianity.'

"But, lo and behold ye, between times, out of the very joy and pride of his heart, and to steady his nerve, and moderate his excitement, my poor Denis, unfortunately, looked on the wine again when it was scarlet; and, moreover, under that stimulus his

religion grew still broader every hour, till, in a burst of zeal, he announced that so broad was his own Christianity, it included Turk, Orangeman, and Jew, Papist, Atheist and Hindu, white, black, red men and mulatto, and that the only standard by which the breadth of his religion might possibly be measured was the bee-line stretching from eternity to the furthest undiscovered fixed star. So, my lads, you may imagine that the *Clarion* that week was a terror. And, if there was sensation in the world at large, there was commotion, I do assure you, in clerical circles.

"Meantime, the new curate, finding himself so well backed, had grown still bolder, and broader, too. There was no one to tighten the rein on him, for his immediate superior had gone on the continent, and the bishop, Dr. Kincaid, was doing a tour in Connemara. But the two copies of the *Clarion* containing the new views of both curate and editor reached, at length, and about the same time, Mahony in the Scottish Highlands, and Dr. Kincaid in Connemara, and gave both of them a sweat that beat a Turkish bath all to small bits.

"Now, Mahony, when the papers reached him, was nursing a deuced bad ankle that he had got from a fall down Ben Something-or-other I can't name, over which he had been trying to spiel, and was under orders from the doctor not to budge an inch for ten days to come; only for that he would have flew home as fast as horses and boats could hurry him. But, in a boiling passion, he fired off a letter of seventeen sheets to Denis Read, calling him a rascal, and a scoundrel, and every bad name that ever was rejected by a dictionary; and denouncing him high up and low down, and commanding him, under pains and penalties of life and death, and the law of the land, to retract and withdraw every word he had said in the last two issues of his paper, and to apologize to Dr. Kincaid, his clergy, the church, and the whole world, and to show by abject humility and

obedience that he admitted his grave crime and was willing to do all in the world to remedy it.

"And Dr. Kincaid, at the same time, wrote to his clergy, ordering them to denounce the *Clarion* from their pulpits, telling their parishioners to shun it like a plague, and forbidding them to touch it with a pair of tongs, and bidding them all announce that when, on the next Friday, he would have reached Derry to attend confirmations, he would take the opportunity of preaching a carefully prepared sermon, that was to lay over the new curate and his doctrines, and set his diocese right again.

"Now, Denis, as you may suppose, was pretty much flabbergasted when Mahony's blow-up reached him. He felt like two mile had been taken off his height at a sweep; and the proudest man in Ireland was the most miserable two minutes after. He cursed Mahony in his heart of hearts; and he said it was green jealousy made him act as he did—that and nothing more. He proclaimed that this was no country for him, where enterprise and originality were hampered and fettered and tied down to millstones, and that it was in some new and undiscovered country he should be, in the heart of Africa, where his genius would get room to expand.

"It was in this state of mind he was when he came bursting into my office on the same afternoon that he had had Mahony's letter; and I remember that he was not well-seated in his chair, when the room began to smell like a still-house.

"I said, 'Denis Read, I'm sorry for ye. I see you have been falling back upon your old enemy again.'

"'Small wonder I would,' said he, bitterly, 'for I have proved it now, and found at last, that the old enemy is the best friend a man ever had. Mahony,' says he, 'the scoundrel has gone back on me.' And he told me the whole case, and asked me for my advice.

"Little time I wasted on Denis, for, to tell you the truth, I wasn't more than half-pleased with him, and I said

the only advice I could offer him was to go home and take the pledge, and prepare to report the bishop's sermon in the fullest style, and write a thumping editorial, commending and praising it; and write a second article giving the curate the divil to ate. Then I held open the door for Denis, for I was in a hurry.

"'But,' says he, 'tell me, tell me what explanation am I to give for turning such a summersault in my own columns?'

"'Plead temporary idiocy,' says I, 'and throw yourself on his lordship's mercy. Good-bye.' And I closed the door hard.

"On the evening before the confirmations I met Denis, accidentally, crossing the Diamond; and right glad I was to find that he smelt sober. So I halted with him for a minute; and he told me that he believed he could yet save his credit and the circulation of the paper by following the grand advice I had given him.

"'I have been given, privately, to understand,' said he, 'from a good authority, that unless I make a *coup d'état* in Friday's issue, the *Clarion* would immediately go the way of all flesh. And, old man,' said he, clapping me on the back cheerily, 'if I don't make the *coup d'état*, I will give you liberty to call me a gentleman. I think,' says he, 'it is just by special design of Providence that the bishop preaches on Thursday, right in the nick of time for my issue. I will give a full and grand report of the sermon,' says he, 'even if to do it I have to issue a supplement double the size of the paper itself. And I have the editorials already written,' says he, 'three of them; the first dilating upon what I call, "the wise, prudent, Christian-like, powerful and convincing sermon of his lordship, our well-beloved bishop; hoping that his weighty words will sink into the hearts of every one of the *Clarion's* readers; and that the mists and errors, which this impulsive, addle-headed curate was inflating their souls with, would be instantly dispersed by the radiance of his lordship's wisdom,

like fogs before the rising sun." And I pile on the agony in that style for the column and a half. Then, as you also recommended me, I give a sub-article, a column and a half, too, to the curate, showing him to the world for what he is; and hoping, in my heart of hearts, that no individual of either or any sex has been so simple-minded, or so despicably ignorant as to have been for the shadow of a moment misled by the diabolical doctrines permitted to be promulgated by this rash, wretched scoundrel. And you wait and see,' says Denis, says he, 'if that doesn't materially help his lordship to lay the rascal out flat.

"The third editorial,' says he, 'I devote to lecturing the people on the grave danger of their being befooled and misled by false teachers and preachers in this decadent age, wherein false theories fall thick as leaves in Vallombrosa. And now, old man,' says Denis, says he, 'I put it to ye straight: don't ye think won't his lordship write me an autograph letter of thanks?'

"Go ahead, Denis,' says I, leaving him; 'I think he will decorate ye with a medal.'

"Well, anyhow, if he doesn't,' says Denis, calling after me, 'he should do it.'

"Well, my lads, to make a long story short, the next was a field day for the bishop, sure enough.

"He had only arrived home the night before, and, on his way to the cathedral that morning, he took occasion to swoop down upon the curate's rooms, and make the grand seizure of the manuscript of an elaborate sermon, which, in further promulgation of his views, the curate had with much diligence prepared.

"The bishop had only time to turn the leaves of it, and see by a dip here and a glance there, that it contained enough heresy to excommunicate a continent. And I have no doubt in the world but that this discovery, going hot foot from which, as he did, gave to his own great sermon that day a good part of the extraordinary fire

and force which spellbound us; although I must admit that it was, in itself, the most eloquent, the most learned and the richest in fruits of research of all the sermons I had ever before heard Dr. Kincaid preach. And when it was finished, every soul in the congregation said—inside themselves—with one mind, 'Where is the poor curate, God help him, and his Broader Christianity now!' And echo answered, 'Where?'

"In the cathedral, I had myself been casting my own eye about several times to see if I could spot Read; but sight or sign of him I didn't make out. I hoped in my heart of hearts, for the poor devil's sake, that he had got the grand sermon down as verbatim as it was humanly possible to have it. And when all was over, and I got outside the door, I went running round to find him; and, in two minutes, a friend I had on the lookout for him came running breathless to me to tell me that Denis was just now coming in of the gate, and he looking as if he had just got up out of a nine days' drunk. And then my heart went down to my boots, for, to tell you truth, I was mightily concerned for the scamp. I came up against him the next minute, and, faith, my friend's description didn't err one bit on the side of severity. I opened the flood-gates of abuse upon the miserable wretch, for I couldn't control myself, and he listened indeed patiently and humbly enough, shaking his head in approval of every point I made. And, when I had finished, says he, 'I admit that, by an unfortunate accident, the drop of drink overtook me this mornin'. I am ruined now entirely,' says he, 'unless, docthor, my good friend, you can show me some loophole out of the difficulty.'

"I looked scathingly at him, and says I, 'Tuppence worth of rope will afford you the only loophole I know of; and trundle your carcass outside the city boundary before you do it, so as to save the town the crowner's charges.' And I marched off, as mad as ten hat-ters.

"I said to myself, 'That's surely the



end of you, Read, anyhow; and 'tis maybe the end of the *Clarion*, too, and of poor Mahony, God help him! though 'tis little he deserves it. And sure 'tis myself he'll curse for it all; and no wonder, for who but myself brought it on him, and who but an omadhaun like myself would have trusted you, Denis Read, and forced you on poor Mahony once again?"

"I went straight home, and sat down by the fire, gloomy enough, and drew to me—to tell the truth—a bottle and a glass, for consolation's sake. And I was sipping a drink at my own ease when, not ten minutes later, the door burst open, and Denis Read leaped into the room, waving a bundle of papers over his head, and screaming like a sea-gull, and dancing round the table, behaving generally like a madman.

"Ye d—d fool, ye," said I, 'will ye come to your senses and tell me the meaning of all this?'

"The meanin' of it all,' says Denis Read, says he, 'is pretty plain.' He held the papers from him at arm's length and, 'The bishop's sermon, the bishop's sermon,' says he; '*ecce signum!* But the press is waiting.' And with another whoop he was gone.

"It was after it was all over I learned that the fellow had the audacity to march right into the vestry, and up to the bishop himself, and demand the manuscript of his sermon. And, when the bishop asked him for what paper he wanted it, and he told him it was for the *Clarion*, the look the bishop gave him made him turn tail and run like a sojer. And they say that to look at the indignation on the bishop's face was better than a picture-gallery.

"But me brave Denis, though he left the vestry quickly, didn't leave the building so quickly; for, on his way into the vestry, he had noticed in a sort of little cloak-room off the entry, the bishop's bag lying half open. And finding himself now in the fix, the courage of desperation tempted him to make a dash into the cloak-room, after observing that there was no one by to see him, and pull open the bag wherein, to his heart's joy, lay a roll of manu-

script, the sermon, the identical thing he was in search of, and would, that instant, have pawned his soul for.

"He didn't take two thoughts about it, but he bundled it under his coat-tails, and, seeing again that the coast was clear, made a clean dash, and escaped with his prize.

"As it was then very late, and the *Clarion* press was kept back, awaiting the sermon, he run, like a robber, for his office, only taking time, on his way, to swoop in upon me, and swoop out again. Without even opening it, to give the contents one glance himself, he hurled the manuscript at the heads of his printers and told them to 'print like the very devil,' omitting a word or two here and a sentence or two there, however, so it would seem to be set from notes, and not from the pillaged manuscript.

"In the meantime, he himself sat down between two whiskey-bottles, and threw off an eloquent introduction to the sermon, in which he said that the impression created on him by this sermon was such as he would never forget till his dying day—if then—and asserted that any one who, after hearing, or after reading, these impressive words and conclusive arguments of his lordship, Dr. Kincaid, would still presume to hold an opinion of their own on the subject of Broader Christianity, deserved to be, metaphorically, kicked out of the church and left, henceforth and forever, in utter darkness, where there would be weeping and wailing and tearing of hair, and scrunching of teeth.

"And, having thus done his duty, nobly, Denis told the foreman—who, more be the same token, was that night as drunk as ever Denis had been—to look after the proofs, and the getting out of the paper, and ordered double the regular number to be sent to all agents. And he himself went, too, to get a right good final drink which he considered he had richly earned, and then to his bed.

"When he put his head out of the window, in the morning, he seen a power of excitement up and down the



street, with the people hurrying here and there, or gathered in knots, every man with an open *Clarion* in his hand, and every man trying to shout louder than his neighbor in the excited discussion that was going on on all sides.

"‘I said,’ says Denis, says he, to himself, ‘I said I would make a *coup d’état*, and I have done it. I have opened the eyes of these people. I must throw myself together, in as good rotation as I can, for I will stake a sixpence on it that the bishop himself, if he doesn’t send a messenger for me, will be coming round here immediately, to thank me in person. And, when he got himself into as good rotation as he could, and hurried down, and took hold of a copy of the *Clarion*, and read over his own editorials once again, he was in fine feather, and a proud man. And then, after he read the great black headings over the report of the bishop’s sermon, and his own glowing introduction, he cautiously dipped into the sermon itself, here and there, and was getting a wee bit puzzled by it, for he came across some sentiments that, somehow or other, seemed to him to read strangely, coming out of the bishop’s mouth; and he wondered whether it was last night’s drink was still confusing his head, and was squaring himself to start the sermon at the beginning, and take it all with him, when, to the poor fellow’s consternation, a messenger came rushing in to say that the bishop was out of his bed and had seen the paper, and had found himself down for preaching a sermon of the new curate’s, which

was as full of heresy as an egg’s full of meat, and which he knew, to his confusion, every paper in the land would have copied and commented on, next day, as his words; and that he was black and blue and white in the face with rage, and there was neither holding nor tying of him, and that he had sent post haste for the police in order to swear information against Denis for burglariously stealing property from his handbag, and to have him arrested and jailed!

"And when me poor Denis heard this, the heart within him, which had been so proud and high all mornin’, sunk down to the soles of his boots; but, seeing there was small time to be wasted, he pocketed all the baggage he was possessed of, which was two colored handkerchiefs and a novel, gave his left-handed blessing to the *Clarion*, the curate and the bishop, departed unostentatiously by the back door, and disappeared from Derry. And it was seven years after before one of the inhabitants or one of his friends there, was granted the privilege of advancing another half-crown to Denis Read to pay for his drinks.

"Mahony, poor fellow, when he came back, found the *Clarion* on the brink of ruin. It took big efforts on his part, and great influence, and a long time, to get the bishop mollified, and to get him to lift his interdiction off the paper. But, poor divil, he succeeded at length; and the *Clarion*, after a time, was blowing as bold blasts as ever, though it never, in all its after career, struck such another bold note as Denis Read’s *coup d’état*."



## NOBLE GIRL

LORD HOWLINGBROKE—You are—aw!—all the world to me, don’t yeh know!

MISS GLADYS BAGROX (*a chip of the old block—and the astute old block was one who knew his own business*)—And I suppose you think the world owes you a living.

# THE HOUSE OF LIFE

By A. C. Edwards

**H**E led me to an ancient House  
Above the hill—a weary road;  
I heard no sound of shrill carouse  
Drift on the breeze as forth we strode  
In silence to the still abode.

He struck upon the massive door.  
I heard the echo whisper wide  
Through empty hall and corridor—  
Till, with a sigh, the whisper died,  
Like little winds at twilight-tide.

Then slow the portal backward swung;  
Across the entrance chamber small  
Long silken draperies were hung,  
And, shining through, we saw the hall  
Aglow with waxen tapers tall.

A thousand lights that trembled not!  
And on the walls were painted well  
Strong legends of Sir Launcelot,  
And of the heathen hosts that fell  
Before the sinless Percivale,

The Garden and the wondrous Tree.  
And maidens beautiful and wise  
Worked in the chamber silently.  
I saw no look of glad surprise  
Within their calm, collected eyes.

All these held shuttles in their hands,  
Which into lengthened looms they threw,  
And wove a web of colored strands.  
And oft the shuttle wildly flew  
And fell the felted floor unto.

It seemed that they had learned of all;  
It seemed that there was naught unseen,  
By those clear eyes majestic,  
Of all the woe that lies between  
What was, and that which might have been.

## THE SMART SET

I greatly marvel'd: Who are these  
 That sit serenely, nor can hear  
 The sobbing of the lonely seas,  
 The moan above the buried bier,  
 And yet whose eyes, so still and clear,

Seem to have pierced all space and wept  
 With peoples on some distant star;  
 Or by the banks of Lethe slept  
 Beside the drowsy nenuphar,  
 Or watched the gates of Death unbar?

He answered: All these things they know,  
 And when the shuttle swift shall err,  
 Before they poise their arm to throw—  
 Yet can they neither stay nor stir,  
 But weave, as in a sepulchre,

The web of Life—unceasing weave  
 The circle of man's shifting day—  
 From golden morn to golden eve  
 They wind the silent hours away,  
 And sad of heart, of heart, are they,

Because they may not choose the strand.  
 But Fate, the Master, he hath chose,  
 And placed the wefts beneath each hand—  
 The Sorrows of the world in rows,  
 And said: "Ye shall weave lives with those!"

I thought: "They wait the setting year.  
 O gentle Sisters, comfort ye;  
 The End of All Things draweth near."  
 They turned their wistful eyes on me,  
 Nor smiled nor spake, nor seemed to see.



## THERE ARE SEVERAL SUCH

"SHE——"  
 "Oh, she prefers to create a sensation rather than a home."



"MRS. GANDER was very lucky to get such a fine man as a second husband."  
 "Yes. She goes on the principle that one good husband deserves another."

# LOVE VERSUS APPENDICITIS

By Henry C. Rowland

MISS AGNES MARCH turned from her scrutiny of the glowing embers, and regarded her fiancé in pained surprise.

"Your answer is hardly such as one might expect, Worthington, from a man who has been so recently imploring the fates to grant him the opportunity of proving his devotion to the lady of his choice; something sanguinary and with a large element of physical danger preferred."

Mr. Worthington Jones squirmed uneasily, and hitched his chair a little closer to the fire. He wisely avoided allowing his eyes to rest upon the fair face of his companion as it was turned to him, rosy-hued from the reflection of the flames. Some inner consciousness seemed to warn him that to do so would be to haul down his flag in defeat. He had learned from a painfully sweet experience the witchery of the flame kindled by a glowing fire in long eyes of a certain violet hue, and, in a crisis like the present, he felt that he could afford to take no chances.

"But the proposition seems so beastly cold-blooded, Agnes," he complained. "I'd fight for you until I was hacked into small cutlets and all that, but getting my appendix cut out is quite a different matter. You see, I have no chance to cut back."

His fiancée looked upon him as coldly as was permitted through the high color of her fresh young face. Her determined little chin was set in a manner which boded ill to opposition. Mr. Jones, throwing her a furtive look, shivered slightly, and spread his athletic palms before the blaze.

Miss March spoke slowly and with

an emphasis which discouraged interruption.

"The situation is this, Worthington. We are engaged to be married in four months, and expect to take a trip around the world on our—er—honey—that is—wedding journey." Her heightened color was disguised in a sudden upward flare of the fire. "Now, you have had three quite severe attacks of appendicitis, and are just recovering from a fourth. Everybody says that the only thing to do is to have the nasty little thing cut out between attacks——"

Mr. Jones interrupted her, somewhat savagely.

"It's mighty easy to advise some one else to get sliced. I'd do it myself——"

"Please don't interrupt. Suppose we were to get 'way off in Baluchistan or Manchuria or——"

"Hoboken," suggested Mr. Jones, moodily.

"Yes—just as the steamer was about to sail——"

"But I don't believe that I ever had real appendicitis, Agnes. I don't much believe in all that yarn about one's appendix, anyway. It's got to be a sort of fad to wear your appendix trimmed close, just like your beard. I'll make the best of mine the way it was built."

"You are talking like a child, Worthington. Every progressive surgeon admits that it is an absolutely worthless structure——"

"That's rank ingratitude for you! They're worth about a thousand dollars apiece to those chaps. I'd be willing to make a cut two inches long

myself to haul a thousand-dollar bill out of some fellow I had no other interest in!"

Miss March tossed her golden head, angrily. "I had never thought to find you so *timid*, Worthington, for that is all that it amounts to. You really need have no anxiety, as the operation with modern methods and between attacks is absolutely safe. All of the surgeons say so."

"Oh, I'll admit that it's safe enough for the surgeons, and even for the friends and relatives," replied Mr. Jones, sardonically.

"I was talking this morning with Dr. Cutler," pursued the girl, ignoring his ill-timed levity. "He is that nice young surgeon who has settled here, you know."

"Yes, I have heard of him," replied Mr. Jones, darkly. "Seems to have settled here on the piazza, from all that I can learn. No doubt he'd like the job, but he won't get it unless he lies in ambush with an ax."

"He tells me," continued the girl, steadily, albeit with an apparent effort, "that he has operated one hundred cases without having a single casualty."

"You shouldn't believe all he tells you, Agnes. There are times when a doctor stretches the truth for the sake of his patient."

"He tells me that he is going to operate to-morrow morning on a young man who has recently become insane——"

"That's probably the reason," suggested Mr. Jones.

"—become insane from automobil-  
ing. He has lately developed appendicitis, and now he fancies that he is an automobile with his boiler burned out. Dr. Cutler thinks that this idea has been suggested by pain in the region of the appendix. He is a wonderful diagnostician."

"I should say that he was wasted in the surgical profession," observed Mr. Jones. "He ought to give it up and write novels. I should think that his talents would go to seed in a place the size of this."

"He does a good deal of operating at Dr. Markham's private retreat for the insane over on the Pine Ridge road. He's to operate there to-morrow on this poor fellow I was telling you about. Dr. Cutler says that there is always work to be found if a man is on the lookout for it."

"He ought to find it," admitted Mr. Jones. "Does he own an automobile?"

Miss March, arising slowly and with great dignity, walked to the corner of the high mantel, which she clasped in both hands, and, resting one rosy cheek against the oaken carving, looked sadly down upon her drooping fiancé.

"Since you decline to take this single request of mine seriously, Worthington, it seems to be a waste of time to discuss it."

"That's so," he assented, with assumed heartiness; "let's change the subject." He glanced at the great hall clock with an exclamation of dismay which was echoed by the girl, whose eyes had followed his.

"Why, it's almost time to start!" he cried.

"Must you go back to town? Can't you stop the night?" She stepped quickly into an alcove, and pressed her face against the curved window-pane. "It is a dreadful night, raining and blowing and black as ink."

"I really must get back to town to-night," he replied, regretfully; "I have several things to attend to before I go to the office."

"And you will consider being operated upon, won't you, dear?" asked Miss March, pleadingly.

"I shall do what seems best to me, Agnes," he replied, with a hint of impatience in his tone.

"I will tell you this much," replied the girl, quickly and bravely, attempting to wink back the tears which had gushed into her eyes at the shortness of his tone, "unless you are operated upon, Worthington, you shall never get me out of the United States. In fact," she went on, pique overcoming her emotion, "if your devotion for



me can't go to the extent of lifting this dreadful load from my mind, I'm not sure that I care to marry you at all."

Before Mr. Jones could fittingly reply, there was heard without the crunching of gravel, followed immediately by three great, agonizing bleats.

"There is the automobile!" cried Agnes. "Papa ordered that because it is so dark that you will need the acetylene search-light." She touched a bell in the wainscoting, and a servant appeared with the luggage of the departing guest, which he proceeded to pile up in the tonneau.

"Here is a great rain-coat of papa's; you can slip it on over all of your things!" exclaimed the girl, holding up the voluminous garment as she spoke.

Five minutes later, the ponderous machine, containing the chastened Mr. Jones, rolled blatantly out through the massive gateway, and started on its six-mile course to the railroad station. Although the road was of the type usually to be found in the Berkshire Hills—that is to say, narrow and tortuous, with sudden unexpected grades and, in places, running between the mountain on one \* side and the chasm on the other, yet such was the power of the gleaming search-light that they were able to proceed at almost the usual rate of speed and with such allowance of safety as is vouchsafed in the order of things to devil-wagons of this character.

As they swept strongly onward, now dipping with the swoop of an owl into shadowy glades where the witch-mist struck damp and chill upon their faces, thence breasting powerfully the opposite grade, and, without pause for breath, plunging on into the redolent, rain-sweet woods, Mr. Jones began to feel the glamour of this dream-like ride. He had, in fact, already lifted up his voice in rhapsody, when from the vitals of the leviathan beneath him there arose a sudden outburst of wild, complaining cries. An

instant later, with a long-drawn, shuddering sigh, the automobile had subsided into an inert, pulseless mass of cooling metal.

The chauffeur, a wiry man of French extraction, leaped from his perch and dived into the machine, somewhat as a weasel slips into a pile of stones. Mr. Jones, snugly ensconced in the tonneau, awaited the verdict with dismal foreboding.

"Well, Gaston?" he inquired, anxiously, as the Frenchman reappeared.

"Ah, monsieur, it is no use. She is dead!"

"How long will it take to bring her to life?"

"One hour—two hour—it is impossible to say. But monsieur is but a mile from *ze gare*. We have come so quick zat, if monsieur is willing to walk from here, he has plenty of time. I send *ze* luggage in *ze* morning."

Mr. Jones glanced at his watch, and saw that he had yet over half an hour in which to reach the station, so, with a word of condolence to the unhappy Gaston, he wrapped the rain-coat about him, and plunged into the murk of the night.

Before he had gone a quarter of a mile, he discovered, to his dismay, that the road forked; but, a brief consideration assuring him that the station was in the valley, he chose the road which appeared to descend, and followed it with a confidence that waned gradually as he proceeded. For what seemed to him to be an interminable distance the road continued its sloping descent, and, to make matters worse, it soon entered a belt of timber where the darkness was so absolute that Mr. Jones had difficulty in keeping in the open, and twice wandered into a roadside rill. The second time he fell his length in the icy water, and arose chilled in body but heated in spirit.

Appreciating the absurdity of further effort, Mr. Jones decided to return to the automobile. Retracing his steps, he, in due time, reached the fork in the roads. But, as he did so, a subtle sound clove the dripping chill of the

night air and was borne in upon his senses to be interpreted as a soul-sickening calamity. From far up the valley there was carried to his ears the faint "chug-a-chug" of the departing demon, with an occasional "blat-blat" as it lifted its raucous voice in sardonic farewell.

Mr. Jones sank to the wet grass on the roadside, dropped his head upon his chest and thrust his numbed hands into the side-pockets of the capacious rain-coat, and, in so doing, made an important discovery. His right hand closed as if by instinct upon a large, smooth body, which, as he drew it forth, emitted a jovial, gurgling chuckle. He saw that what he held in his hand was a pint flask, all but filled. Evidently his prospective father-in-law was, where automobiles were concerned, a man of ripened wisdom and experience.

Mr. Jones was careful to throw no slight upon this gracious donation of the gods. Imbued with fresh courage, he rose to his feet and took counsel as to his next move. Believing that the other road must be the one leading to the railroad station, he started forward valiantly, having determined that his wisest course would be to reach the station and spend the night in a modest near-by hostelry. Much to his surprise, however, before he had gone a mile, the road which had gradually ascended led him out upon a wind-swept plain that seemed to stretch away into infinity, dark, cold and forbidding.

At this discouraging development, Mr. Jones decided that it would be well to refresh himself further, in the hope that, by stimulating his mental machinery, some light might be thrown upon the mystery before him. In this he was successful, for, as he replaced the flask, it suddenly occurred to him that the road which he was on led to Indian Lake, where there were a small hotel and a colony of Summer cottages.

"That's it," he thought to himself. "That fool chauffeur must have run right past the road to the station. As

I remember it, the hotel is only about a mile beyond that fork in the roads, and the best thing that I can do is to push right along until I strike it."

Greatly encouraged, Mr. Jones proceeded on his sodden way, covered with mud, soaked to the skin, yet fairly comfortable withal. Soon his road led him through a grove of pine-trees, on emerging from which, he saw in the distance what, from their number and extent, could be no other than the lights of the hotel.

When at last he came to the house, he entered the front door, which was unlatched, and walked to the desk. Finding no one there, he was about to proceed on a tour of investigation when he heard a heavy step on the stair outside, and the next moment the doorway was blocked by a man of gigantic stature with a jovial Hibernian face. He was clad in a somewhat tattered uniform of faded blue, and Mr. Jones was correct in supposing that he must be the night-watchman.

"Good evening," said Mr. Jones, briskly, striving to compensate in tone for that which he feared he might lack in appearance. "Are you the night-watchman?"

"I am, sorr," replied the giant, with a merry twinkle in his blue eye.

"I suppose the night-clerk has gone to bed. My automobile has broken down, so I left it back on the road and came here to get a room for the night," pursued Mr. Jones.

"You are welcome as flowers in May, sorr. Sure, I've been lookin' for you the last hour and more."

"Looking for me?" exclaimed Mr. Jones, in surprise. "Oh, I see," he went on, with a sudden inspiration. "The chauffeur discovered his mistake, and they telephoned here to say that I had broken down and would probably run in here to get housed for the night."

"Ye've hit the nail on the head, sorr," replied the Irishman, with an expansive smile. "Sure, yer room's ready and waitin' for ye, wid the bed turned back and a fire on the heart'."

"I am rather shy about going near

a fire with all this gasoline about me," observed Mr. Jones, jocosely.

"Then ye'd best hop into bed an' leave me take yer trimmin's down to dry, sorr. Sorra a one of 'em 'ud burn wid the wather in 'em," he went on, noticing Mr. Jones's bedraggled condition. "Ye'd best get into bed an' leave me give ye a good rub wid alcyhol. Will ye come up now, sorr?"

With a thankful heart, and considerably touched at the thoughtfulness of his fiancée in telephoning to the hotel to be on the lookout for him, Mr. Jones followed his guide, who led him to a comfortable room, immaculately clean and with a bright fire blazing on the hearth, and here he lost no time in removing his sodden outer garments. The watchman left him for a moment, to return at once with a night-robe and dressing-gown. In compliance with his good-humored offer, Mr. Jones stretched himself upon the bed for the suggested rubbing-down.

"Go easy on the right-hand side of my body; I've got a game appendix there," he warned.

"Then be yer lave, sorr, I'll put a bit of a poultice on; it will take out every stitch of the pain."

"You're a corker!" observed Mr. Jones, admiringly. "I guess the best thing that I can do is to put myself absolutely in your hands, and maybe I won't need an operation, after all." He yawned, and his lids dropped heavily. In the reaction of warmth and comfort, the effects of the whiskey began to make themselves apparent.

"'Twill save the both av us a dale of trouble, sorr!" observed the Irishman, with a chuckle.

Too drowsy to be surprised at this somewhat peculiar speech, Mr. Jones was about to sink into a pleasant doze, when suddenly, from down the corridor outside his room, a strident voice was uplifted in declamation.

"Water! water! water! Verily, verily I say unto you that I am sore athirst. Where art thou, thou Hiber-

nian hound? It is I, the prophet Ezekiel, who calls!"

"What in the dickens is the matter with that fellow?" demanded Mr. Jones, sitting suddenly upright.

"Nivir mind him, sorr!" replied his huge valet, reassuringly; "troth, 'tis not wather that do be ailin' him, d'ye see?"

"Oh—tight, eh?" replied Mr. Jones in relief, for there had been a note in the high voice that was strangely disturbing.

When Tim, the night-watchman, returned from his ministrations to the thirsty prophet, Ezekiel, Mr. Jones was sleeping like an innocent child. The big Irishman stole softly from the room, closed the door behind him and slid a heavy bolt, which, in a manner different from the custom of most Summer hotels, was attached to the outside of the solidly constructed door. Next, after a swift scrutiny of the corridor, he walked quickly to the stairs, which he descended heavily, but noiselessly, his rubber-soled shoes falling with a soft thud suggestive of the step of one of the great carnivora. In front of a screen door at the end of the lower hall, he stopped and rapped several times.

"What is it?" finally came a drowsy voice in answer.

"'Tis me, docthor, Tim. 'K.2' shlipped out av the house this avenin' just afther I came on——"

"What!" came sharply from within. "Why didn't you wake me?"

"Och, ye were shlapin' that aisy, docthor, dear, I hadn't the heart to wake ye!" replied Tim, soothingly. As a matter of fact, he had himself been peacefully asleep. "Sure, there's no harm done, sorr. The minute he was gone I started to luk around for him, and there he was be the stove in the office, havin' just stepped out for a rowl in the mud."

"Where is he now?"

"Back in his crib, sorr, rubbed down slick an' smooth wid alcyhol and a bit av soap-poultice on the stummick av him."

"All right—don't let him get out again."

"Divil a fear, sorr. Good night, sorr!"

Mr. Jones was aroused from deep oblivion by a sweetly modulated girlish voice at his elbow. Looking up in amazement and incredulity, he was scandalized beyond expression to discover, standing unconcernedly at the side of his bed, a charming vision in snowy muslin. In one hand, she held a small glass containing a colorless solution.

"What a splendid sleep you have had," she observed, pleasantly; "it's almost ten o'clock!"

"W-w-what?" replied the palsied Mr. Jones.

Her pretty face smiled down at him reassuringly. "I thought that you would never wake up," she replied, brightly, "so I had to wake you, myself. Now drink this, like a good fellow," she added, coaxingly.

"B-b-but who—are you?"

"Oh, I'm your day-nurse. You haven't seen me before. Miss Hallo-way was on when you came in last evening, you know."

"She was!" exclaimed Mr. Jones, blushing furiously. "Why, I thought it was—eh—an Irishman—"

She laughed, merrily. "Oh, that was Tim—he's the night-watchman. Now drink this, like a good man, and it will clear things up!"

"Then you'd better bring the bottle!" replied Mr. Jones, eagerly draining the contents of the glass. "Jove! what whiskey that of the old man's must be!" he added, under his breath.

His attractive attendant deftly swung a small, enameled washstand to the side of the bed, and poured some water into a basin.

"I say—what's that for?" demanded Mr. Jones, in surprise.

"For you to wash your face and hands," she replied, smoothly.

"B-b-but I don't think that I understand!" replied the bewildered Mr. Jones. "Where am I, anyway?" He grasped his head firmly in both hands and closed his eyes, seeking vainly a solution of the perplexing mystery.

"Am I off my base—or what? I thought that—the—automobile broke down—and——"

"There, there!" she interrupted, soothingly, while an expression of real pity crossed her fresh young face. "Don't worry about that; you are with your friends. How does your side feel this morning? Have you any pain?"

"Not a bit—by Jove!—what's this contraption around my waist? Oh, for heaven's sake!—what the dickens—I beg your pardon, but I can't seem to get straightened out! What is this place?"

Under the stress of his emotion, Mr. Jones's aristocratic face had suddenly grown so wild that the nurse surveyed him anxiously, and quickly touched a button at the head of the bed. A youth in white duck clothes appeared in the doorway.

"You had better get Tim," whispered the nurse. "I'm afraid he's going to be violent. Has the doctor come yet?"

"He's in the operating-room. He says to give the anesthetic in here."

A minute later, as the now panic-stricken Mr. Jones sat staring wildly about him, the huge Irishman entered the room, followed by an alert young man who carried in his hands an odd-looking apparatus of rubber and gleaming metal, from which there emanated a sickening and forbidding odor. With infinite relief, Mr. Jones's eyes fell upon his friend of the night before, who, in the present stress of his emotions, seemed to be the first actuality which his tortured vision had beheld in this weird place of enigmas.

"Oh, there you are!" he exclaimed, in relief. "Now just get my clothes, and ask these people to get out of here. I'll make my inquiries by mail."

"Everything is all ready, Miss Vincent," remarked he of the strange, malodorous machine. "I suppose he'll kick up a fuss, but I guess that Tim and George can restrain him." He turned to the pallid Jones.

"Now lie down, my friend, and do as I tell you!" he commanded, authoritatively. He walked to the bedside,

and pushed Mr. Jones gently but firmly back upon his pillow.

"Who the devil are you?" cried the agonized Jones, furiously; then, at the pressure of the other's hand, all self-restraint was swept aside. Arising suddenly in bed, he struck out with all of the force of his athletic right arm. The blow landed squarely over the young man's eye, and sent him flying across the room. The next instant, Mr. Jones was pinioned firmly by two pairs of mighty arms. He saw his enemy returning swiftly, his face filled with a fiendish purpose. Something soft and suffocating was crammed down over his nose and mouth. For an instant, he struggled desperately, striving to cry out; then his senses whirled in space, and he sank into oblivion.

Young Dr. Cutler and his youthful assistant walked smartly down the path leading from the sanatorium, and turned into the Pine Ridge turnpike. The surgeon was in the happy state of self-satisfaction which usually follows a necessary operation skilfully performed, and unlikely to be followed by aught but a safe and speedy convalescence. As they passed through the gate, he turned to his assistant.

"That was a typical case for operative interference, Dudley. Another attack would probably have put that man out of the hunt for good. As it is, he should make a good recovery, and you can't tell, it might even have a good effect upon his mental condition. Operations sometimes do."

"Funny case of aberration," replied the younger man, tenderly stroking a raised discoloration over his left eye. "Thinks he's an automobile, doesn't he? By George, for a minute or two I was rather inclined to agree with him!"

They had turned into the highroad and were walking toward the hotel about a quarter of a mile farther on, where they had planned to lunch with a mutual friend. As they passed a deserted farm-house which stood a little way back from the road, there suddenly fell upon their ears a series of strange and discordant cries.

"Chug-a-chug, chug-a-chug, chug-a-chug—toot-toot—sh-h-h-h—s-s-shoo—shoo——"

"What in—" began the surgeon, in amazement, for the sounds were obviously proceeding from the lusty throat of a man. The next instant there was a crash and a rattle of planks. A weird figure, swathed in a mass of unclean bedding, hurtled suddenly from the doorless aperture and bore swiftly toward them.

"Toot-toot!" he yelled, wildly, "get out the way—I'm an automobile!"

Too paralyzed to move, they stood open-mouthed and staring in the middle of the road. He of the flowing robes never faltered in his mad career, but, bearing down upon the surgeon, collided with him with such violence that both men rolled in the dust of the road.

The surgeon was the first to recover his feet. His assailant lay where he had fallen, emitting a strange hissing noise.

"Why didn't you clear the track?" the latter demanded, peevishly. "Confound you—now my boiler's burned out!"

For a moment, the surgeon stared down at him in a dismay too profound for any expression; then, with a feeble sigh, he subsided, an inert mass on the damp grass of the roadside.

"Rum!" he gasped, through quivering lips. "Give me *rum*! Quarts of it—gallons of it! tuns of it! Let me drink and never afterward awake!"

Mr. Worthington Jones reclined luxuriously against his pillows, and surveyed the abject surgeon with the indulgent eye of a generous conqueror. In his hand he held a small bottle, tightly corked, in which there floated a once menacing portion of his anatomy. At intervals his eyes would fall upon it with a satisfaction too deep for words.

"Well, doctor," he finally observed, "of course it was an inexcusable error on your part, but I am not disposed to be nasty about it!"

"My dear fellow," replied the sur-



geon, meekly, "I unhesitatingly admit that the joke is on me!"

"Not altogether," replied Mr. Jones, kindly; "in fact," he continued, "while there is but slight ground for the supposition, I am inclined to fear that many of my friends might take the other point of view."

"Many of one's friends are such asses," began the surgeon, hopefully, "that, while the fault is mine, I suppose if the story was to get around, you might never hear the last of it."

"Possibly—that might apply to either of us," replied Mr. Jones, sweetly. "The medical profession is so hungry for the chance to roast a colleague; especially one who is young, ambitious and not without a certain ability."

The surgeon straightened his back.

"Have you—eh—any proposition—eh—anything to suggest?" he inquired, coldly.

"I have," replied Mr. Jones. "Suppose that I had consulted you professionally. Would you have advised an operation? I ask you this as man to man."

"If I had not," replied the surgeon, with deep feeling, "I should have been unfit to practise my profession."

"Very good. What would have been your fee for such an operation, including the subsequent treatment?"

"In your case," replied the surgeon, qualifiedly, "five hundred dollars would have covered it, not including your hospital expenses."

"Very good. I have always understood that these cursed things"—shaking the bottle savagely—"were expensive luxuries. Now, doctor, I have a proposition to make, actuated not by the fear of ridicule, but by loftier motives. We will consider that I have sought this operation, and that it was all done according to Hoyle. Send me your bill for five hundred dollars, and I will mail you a cheque—*provided* the story does not get out—especially to the ears of my fiancée, Miss March, and her family."

A sudden light flashed in upon the alert perceptions of the surgeon; he

strove in vain to stifle the audible laugh that arose to his lips. From his pillow Mr. Jones grinned back, expansively.

"You are more than generous!" cried the surgeon, enthusiastically, "but really, you know, I can't take a fee for a bull-headed blunder like this!"

"I would much prefer it," replied Mr. Jones, decidedly.

"Oh—well—" answered the surgeon, weakly, "of course, if you insist——"

"I do. Do you think that you can close the mouth of the cub who smothered me? B-r-r-gh!"

"As easily as you closed his left eye," replied Dr. Cutler, emphatically.

"And this loco outfit?"

"They will be silent as the grave—for their own sakes."

"Good! Then it is a bargain, doctor. When you go down, will you kindly telephone the glad news to Miss March?"

"I will do so at once," replied the doctor, feelingly.

Early the following forenoon, while Mr. Jones was resting comfortably, there came a rustle outside his door which sounded to his expectant ears like the flutter of the wings of angels. An instant later two round arms were thrown tenderly about his neck, and his face was covered with tears and kisses.

"Oh, Worthington—my own darling boy—my dear, brave hero!—to think of your coming here all alone, and without saying a word to any one! My precious!"

"My dear little girl," replied Mr. Jones, with deep feeling, "I am entitled to no praise whatever. I simply could not help myself. Sometimes, you know, our destiny is in higher hands than our own! I'm glad it wasn't an amputation, though!" he added, with a shudder.

"You great, big-hearted darling—and to think of your daring to come to this awful place!"

"You do it an injustice, dear. I was never in a more godly company in all my life. The prophet Ezekiel is just next door, there are two John the Baptists down-stairs, and there is an angel in my room at the present moment."

## THE HUNTER OF DREAMS

HE is hunting a dream in the fields of Thought  
Over the brooks and far away;  
He can hear far down on the purple wind  
The dream-hounds' slumberous bay!

Out of what nook did the quarry start?  
What tangle of fantasy, still and deep,  
Hid the sly rover, soft-footed rover,  
Fresh from the hills of sleep?

Is it his youthful dream of power—  
Fleeting, fleeting ever and aye?  
Is it his dream of a deathless fame  
And his star against the sky?

Down the wind he's hunting his dream,  
On and away through the glooming wood—  
Following, following, following far  
To the dunes of Solitude.

Is it his own true love he seeks—  
Seeks and seeks as she flies before?  
Dreams he, in vain, he catches the light  
That lures forevermore?

Hath he not heard, in a secret hour,  
That a dream leaves never a trace behind,  
Save only an echo within the heart  
And its light upon the wind?

He is hunting a dream in the fields of Thought  
Over the brooks and far away;  
It has hidden deep in the darksome wood  
Of the Vale of Yesterday!

JOHN JEROME ROONEY.



## WOMAN'S RANK INGRATITUDE

BENHAM—I have had my life insured for five thousand dollars in your favor.  
MRS. BENHAM—Well, I'll be glad to have the money, but I think you've overestimated your value.

## IN EMPTY COURTS

HIS love is warm and constant as the sun—  
 Like sunlight in the outer spaces spent;  
 In empty courts where tinkling fountains run  
 And flowers bloom, and he is well content.

To you my heart must turn for all its light.  
 Alas! the grudging taper that you give!  
 So small to make the inner temple bright,  
 So dim to give the glow by which I live!

He is the sun, for all the world to mark—  
 So warm and fair he shines! nor understands  
 That I must still be crouching in the dark,  
 Shielding a little flame with loving hands.

NORA MAY FRENCH.



## WITHOUT PREJUDICE

PROPRIETOR—I want you to make a picture of my Summer hotel.  
 ARTIST—Can I see it?  
 “Heavens, no! It might prejudice you.”



## SOLITAIRE!

I IN truth, I ask nor diamonds  
 Nor rubies for mine own—  
 Your heart is hard enough, my dear,  
 To be my precious stone.

CHAPIN HOWARD.



## THE FORCE OF HABIT

STRANGER—Pardon me, sir, but have you a wife?  
 DRUGGIST (*absent-mindedly*)—No, but I have something just as good.

# THE ROYSTONE BANK CASE

By Julian Hawthorne

JAMES THORPE ALLINGHAM was sixty years old; his compactly molded face and dark eyes, in which there was often an ironic expression, showed few marks of time; but his close-cut, silvered hair betrayed him. He was a slightly-built man, little above medium height, but wiry and active, yet with a vein of the voluptuous, indolent Oriental in him. His bristly, short beard, trimmed to a point in the French style, had more of the original black in it than his hair. A fire was wont to sparkle from his eyes, intolerantly if he were annoyed or opposed; but imperiously and audaciously, under the influence of beautiful women. His small head was packed full of a fine and strong brain, clear, cold and penetrating; acting upon his emotional nature, it had made him skeptical; a deep sense of humor wrought the skepticism into a chuckling, disconcerting mockery. He dominated most men, and no woman who had known him well ever forgot him.

He was a university graduate, a reader of books of science, familiar with good literature, of bold views, independent in thought. He had the finest breeding, easy, confident and quiet. He dressed correctly, but wore his clothes carelessly. He had inherited a fortune from his father, had taken up banking twenty-five years ago, and achieved more wealth. A first wife had died while he was in his early thirties; he had married again at forty, and had a daughter now nineteen years old, whom he loved. His present wife, a religious, simple woman, had brought him this daugh-

ter and money, but nothing else that he valued. He was a man of power and leading in the city of Pennborough, where he had lived since founding his bank. He had been offered, and had refused, high political preferment. He lived like a prince in his big house on Curzon street. In business he was thought keen but conservative, and his financial credit was unquestioned. The Roystone National Bank was the best bank in the city, and the best people kept their accounts at it.

Olympia Allingham had had her coming-out party a few weeks before this narrative begins. She was a handsome, innocent, tender-hearted, high-spirited girl, with dark hair and blue eyes. She loved her father devotedly, and honored him religiously. At the time of her coming-out, her engagement to Stephen Bentinck, a young physician of ability and reputation, had been announced. It was a love-match. Stephen had a good practice, but was not rich; but Allingham favored him, and the financial path would be made smooth for the young couple. It was now early June; they were to be married in October.

Allingham sat in his private office, though it was after banking hours; for Eugene Calverly, the cashier, had said he wished to speak with him that afternoon. Calverly, a man of forty, had entered the bank young, as a clerk, and in fifteen years had attained his present position. He was methodical, intelligent, and perfectly trustworthy. His deep-set gray eyes were steady; his utterance measured and emphatic. His mind plodded

where Allingham's leaped or flew; but the latter knew his value. Allingham was accustomed to rally him and break jests upon him, but he respected him. He was also aware that Calverly loved Olympia with a worshiping passion, the only one of his sober life. It had probably never been other than a hopeless passion; certainly, Allingham himself, ever since he had surmised it, had always frankly discouraged and even ridiculed it. Olympia had never known anything of the matter; she was very kind and familiar with poor Calverly. He had sometimes held her in his arms when she was a baby; she did not suspect what he would have given to do so now. This was one of the silent, honorable tragedies. When the engagement between her and Stephen Bentinck was made known, Calverly seemed to become more round-shouldered and methodical, but he said nothing.

The theme of his present interview with the president of the bank was not an agreeable one, but it had to do with business, not romance. We need not follow it in detail. Owing to various causes, capital had been flowing away from the bank, and little had been coming in. The balance on hand was dangerously small. Unless this situation were soon changed for the better, calamity was at hand. No breath of suspicion had as yet blown upon the credit of the institution; but were a few large depositors to draw heavily, the secret would out. That was the gist of his statement. Had Mr. Allingham any suggestions or information to give?

The banker's pointed, aggressive chin seemed to thrust out through his grizzled beard as he turned on his cashier with a smile, looking him in the eyes.

"Aren't getting scared, are you?" he said, in his quick way, with a sort of chuckle running through the words. "Any time you think you're over your depth, swim ashore, you know. You can get a position somewhere; I'll see to that."

"No; if we go down, I sha'n't want to swim any more, Mr. Allingham," replied the other. "In any other place than this, I should be out of my element, if not out of my depth. But I would drown, or do anything else, to help you and yours," he added.

"Oh! Well, suppose you begin with cooking the books for the state examiner," Allingham suggested, still smiling.

Calverly accepted this as an instance of his employer's irony.

"I shouldn't think of asking for your confidence, beyond the limited extent which my position necessitates," he said, with a sigh. "You have the responsibility, and you do the business; the directors leave it all to you. I only thought, if you should care to talk over anything with me—any service I could perform—I am at your disposal."

"I see—very nice of you—faithful retainer of the house, and so forth! Possibly, too, you may be influenced by the prospect of seeing Olympia thrown out on the streets to beg her living, and deserted by her fiancé?"

Calverly's long, pale face reddened; he bent forward, and wrung his long fingers together between his knees. "Oh!" he murmured, in a low voice; "oh, Mr. Allingham!"

"Still, even to save Olympia, you'd draw the line at cooking the books?" the banker pursued, tilting back idly in his chair. "To be virtuous, we must sometimes be cruel, eh? I suppose your virtue is what keeps you up to the scratch, as whiskey does other men, doesn't it, Calverly?"

The cashier tilted his head to one side, with a distressed expression, but was silent.

"Oh, you're no fun, Calverly—you're stupid!" exclaimed Allingham, impatiently. "Is there anything else?"

"No," said the other, rising. "But I think I understand—you've relieved my mind—I know that if you knew anything—"

"Oh, go to the devil!" chuckled Allingham. "I'd ask you to dinner, but Stephen will be there, and you'd have no appetite. Only one hundred and



sixty-seven thousand left in the safe, is there? And my house is worth about twice as much; furniture, say a hundred thousand; real estate and other investments, maybe a million. Liabilities, two million odd, was it? Yes, that bank examiner will knock spots out of us, won't he? Make a good scandal for the newspapers, won't it? Been in business quarter of a century; possessed the confidence of the entire community, and turned out rotten, after all! Too bad, really! I say, Calverly, I want to ask your opinion on one point."

The cashier, who had moved slowly to the door, turned round. He had been reassured by his employer's remarks, or, rather, by the scornful and mocking manner of them; it would have been impossible to speak in that way had anything been really wrong. As for the contemptuous, sarcastic tone, he could put up with that; he was used to it. But the changed voice in which the banker now spoke startled him, and it was with some return of apprehension that he met his look.

"What age does a man, hitherto honest, have to reach, before he may be considered past all danger of embracing a criminal career?" Allingham asked, quite gravely, but with that fire in his eyes which Calverly had occasionally seen, and always dreaded.

The cashier stood bewildered, unable to make any rejoinder.

"Come, brace up, my man," continued Allingham, after a pause, during which he had looked straight into the cashier's fixed eyes. "Am I too old—supposing me to have been honest until now—to begin stealing? Answer that!"

Calverly found his voice with difficulty. His thoughts stammered, like his words.

"I—Mr. Allingham! You, the father of . . . For twenty years I have looked up to you as of inviolable integrity. I can no more conceive of such a thing than . . . I beg your pardon . . . Oh, I am sure you are jesting!"

Allingham lifted his black brows,

threw himself back again in his chair, and laughed gently and pleasantly.

"Oh, found me out at last, have you? All right; trot home and sleep sound. I must try to be more serious in future. The bank will go on all right, Calverly. Good-bye."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Allingham, and again I beg your pardon," replied the other; and he went out with a lighter heart than he had come in with. Of course it was all right; there were resources in that man that could never be exhausted.

The banker, left alone, sat quiet in his chair for a while, twisting his beard and gazing at the floor. "Well!" he said, at last. Then he closed his desk, took his hat and went home, with the light step that speaks a free mind.

## II

THERE were only the family and Stephen Bentinck at dinner at Mr. Allingham's that evening. It was a quiet and comfortable *partie carrée*, with old Philip Dorpe, the butler, waiting on them.

Stephen's head was high above the ears, full and deep; his features were marked, and his cheeks hollow, but with a healthy color in them. In body he was athletic and slender. He had a slow, grave smile, which was delightful to see; it brought a lovely, sparkling, gentle light into his eyes. He had kept pure the high ideals of conduct of his youth. He was of great diligence in his profession, learned and conscientious, and a natural thinker, which gave him the valuable quality, in medical practice, of originality and initiative. In general society he was retiring, reticent and shy; but with those he liked and trusted he was genial, playful and expressive. He was not an easy man to become familiar with; but it was not difficult for those who came in contact with him to perceive that he had a large, luminous, equitable mind, a feminine tenderness of nature, and, underneath, a sinewy masculine fiber,

giving assurance that in emergencies he would never fail to show the true manhood of a man.

"There was another of those awful cases of a bank cashier taking the funds of the bank and running away, in the paper this evening," observed Mrs. Allingham, in her plaintive voice. The good lady was perhaps morbidly religious, and very sensitive to moral lapses in members of the community; and this sensitiveness was kept alive by her habit of perusing the daily journals, and dwelling upon those features in them which recount the frailties of the race. "He is said to have been a church member, too," she went on. "I'm sure there will come some terrible visitation upon mankind for all this wickedness. There seems to be no respect for the laws of God or man."

"What do you say to that?—are we growing worse or better?" demanded Allingham, cheerfully, looking up at Bentinck with his inquisitorial smile.

"It seems to me, the worst thing is hypocrisy," the young man said. "Such cases as Mrs. Allingham speaks of show that the man could not any longer bear to do evil while everybody believed he was doing good; he preferred to break out and be known for what he was. The community is like the body: when the disease appears on the surface, it is uglier to look at, but less deadly than internal lesions. There is more hope of curing them."

"Oh, that's a sagacious doctrine," laughed Allingham. "The worse we appear, the better we are! That ought to satisfy both sides. Quite diplomatic!"

"Don't mind him, Stephen," said Olympia, with the confident optimism of girlhood. "Nobody hates deception so much as papa. He even likes to pretend he's bad when he's good."

"Wealth is a new thing with us," Stephen continued; "we don't understand it yet, and so we think it all the more desirable. It divides us into a few giants among a lot of pigmies. But when the novelty has worn off,

nobody will care to be a giant, and then the temptation to try to become one, which causes more than half the crimes, will be gone. There are never many people strong enough to turn from anything that really tempts them; when there is constant temptation, there will be more yieldings than usual, but not on that account more intrinsic wickedness, do you think? We are passing through a phase of growth, which always weakens temporarily; but experience will cure it."

"Well, it's no new philosophy that society stimulates crime in the individual," rejoined Allingham. "The strong men must come out on top; what is the real top, is the question. As long as we think it's wealth, there'll be crime, because we don't know how to give wealth to everybody; besides, wealth makes people polite and pleasant to you, and we all like that. A time may come when people will be polite chiefly to beggars—as I believe is the way in India—but meanwhile, those who have or can get wealth are bound to keep or seize it, by fair means or foul. As for hypocrisy, in three cases out of five, a man is a hypocrite, not for his own sake, but for his wife and children's; they believe in him, and he can't find the nerve to undeceive them. What is wickedness, anyway? It's just a bad name for doing the best we can for ourselves; and that's instinct!"

"Then don't you think criminals ought to be punished, papa?" asked Olympia.

"If you can catch 'em—by all means," said her father, laughing; "but the punishment will always be not for their crime, but for letting themselves be found out. For getting found out shows a weakness in them somewhere; and weakness is unforgivable. We're like a pack of wolves; as soon as one of us is wounded, the others tear him to pieces."

"You are very radical!" said Stephen, encountering the other's eyes, and gradually smiling.

"Oh, it's terrible!" lamented Mrs. Allingham. "I really think, James,

you ought not to jest in that way in the presence of young people. You confuse their ideas of right and wrong."

Olympia arose and kissed her father, and stood beside him, looking down on him with radiant confidence, her arm around his neck. "Papa never confuses me," she said. "He's the best and dearest man in the world—he and Stephen, I mean!"

"You see the way hypocrites are made!" said Allingham, laughing at Stephen.

Dorpe came in and said: "If you please, Mr. Allingham, there's a—a gentleman in the anteroom; says he called by appointment, sir. Shall I show him into the drawing-room?"

The dinner was over; they had been at nuts and raisins for some time. Allingham stood up, and put his daughter's arm from his shoulder. He drew his napkin across his bearded lips, and threw it down with a frown. But in the same moment his brow was clear again.

"That's all right," he said. "Take him into the study. I'm coming."

"These business people ought to see you in your office, and not come after you here," Olympia declared. "You belong to us, here; we don't go bursting into your office, and disturbing you there."

"Oh, this man is a special case," replied her father, taking her hand and patting it. "It wouldn't do to have him seen around the bank. He's a great financial genius; if our credit were to go down, he's the man to restore it. But if it were known that he and I were plotting together, the depositors would be tumbling over one another to-morrow to draw out their balances; and I shouldn't be able to afford you a trousseau."

"I don't like such a man," said Olympia. "Send him away, papa—or let me come into the study with you and hear what he has to say."

She was half in earnest, and held him by the sleeve.

He seemed to hesitate a moment, and gave her an intent look. Then he drew his arm away.

"No—it's too late!" he said, briskly and laughingly. "He has me in his toils, and I must sign my name in his book! Go and play with Stephen. I can't risk slipping up on that trousseau of yours, you know! Go in and play. I'll be back presently."

Light and alert as usual, he passed from them down the wide hall. Just before he disappeared, he turned and saw them standing in the light of the chandelier; Stephen had given his arm to Mrs. Allingham, and Olympia was close to his other side, and she waved her hand and kissed her fingers to him. He returned a quick, bright nod, and was gone into the shadows.

"I know it's somebody come to beg money of him, and papa doesn't want it known, and that's why he wouldn't let him come to the bank," said Olympia. "Papa does more good that nobody knows of than any other man in town—except you, beloved." And she laid her cheek for a moment on her lover's shoulder.

The visitor, standing invisible in the unlighted study, saw this picture of the young man between the old woman and the girl, and the girl's gesture of love. It shone out on him, and vanished, like a glimpse of heaven. But it had found its way into a dark and stern heart. Its image remained there after the active, erect figure of his host had intervened in the doorway, and the door had closed behind him as he came in. Then the host pressed an electric button, and the room was flooded with light.

The Rubicons of life often seem to be crossed swiftly and easily; but it is only because the last step of the crossing is the first one that we take note of. There have been many previous ones, and, at each one, the chance to draw back. Allingham's soul had been, longer than he himself perhaps imagined, preparing for the culmination which had now arrived. The dark influences that guide us to evil, disguise, as long as possible, the increasing perils of the path; and when, finally, the disguises are thrown off, they have acquired other means to hold us. We

may believe we are freest at the moment when we are first irrevocably slaves.

The electric light softly flooded the room; but in the same instant, the last rays of an inner light were withdrawn, and the spirit upon which they had rested stood in darkness.

### III

ALLINGHAM and his visitor now stood face to face, and scrutinized each other with interest.

The room in which this interview took place possessed individuality. It was the private retreat of its owner, and, more than any other part of the house, reflected his traits. Both the intellectual and the emotional qualities of the man were intimated in it. It was a spacious room; the walls, to the height of a man, were lined with books in handsome cases; above them glowed pictures, uttering beauty, sublimity, or passion; in one corner, a bronze group by Rodin portrayed a girl led downward by a satyr. Beneath a stained-glass window was a deep divan, with silk cushions, and low-seated easy-chairs stood by glistening tables, with magazines and portfolios. Upon the carved mantelpiece stood tall Venetian glasses; and all those things spoke of culture, slightly tinged with the voluptuous.

But, peeping forth here and there, like untoward visages through interstices of fair foliage, were indications of another tenor. Squatting in a compartment of one of the bookcases, between books of religious and social philosophy, was an exquisitely-wrought but horrible Japanese wood-carving of a man committing *hara-kiri*. Under the allegorical form of the sacred Dove, in the stained-glass window, hung a stuffed South American bat, with outspread dusky wings and hideous face. Some of the most handsomely bound books bore the names of the grossest French and Italian writers. A small alcove was fitted up as a chemical laboratory, but it was noticeable

that most of the drugs and solutions were poisons. On a wall of this alcove hung a drawing, badly executed, but wonderfully expressive, of a peculiarly revolting Voodoo rite. The catalogue need not be extended. Such features might be regarded simply as the excursions of a mind resolved to become philosophically conversant with all parts of nature and human nature; but, the more they were examined, the more did they seem to imply a voluntary perversity, a pregnant outlawry, a vicious curiosity, a flattered rebellion of the dark against the bright. The first impression was of an unwelcome discordance; the final one was of the deliberate profanation of good, and mockery of truth. And, doubtless, though a man may dwell long in the mere imagination and histrionics of the unlawful, a time will arrive when the facile dream stiffens into unchangeable reality, and the beguiling slave changes abruptly into the master.

Allingham's bidden guest was a sturdy man of middle height, with a powerful head and face and dark auburn, short-curling hair. He was well but unobtrusively clad in dark garments; his hands were small but very muscular; in one he carried his black derby hat, the other rested on the gold head of an ebony cane. His bearing was studiously undemonstrative, and his countenance expressionless; but his half-closed gray eyes gathered all details and significances in a glance.

"You're Mr. Dexter Gunn, are you?" said Allingham, after a pause. "And you're the top of your profession?"

"I call myself by that name, Mr. Allingham," replied the visitor; "and I suppose I have my points, as you have yours." His voice was smooth and unmodulated, though with evident force behind it.

Allingham made another short pause, as if to give the personality of his interlocutor time to stamp itself upon his senses.

"Well, you look the part—I guess you'll do," he then said. "The door of this room is locked; no one can hear

anything said here. Sit down, Mr. Gunn; we were bound to meet some time; I preferred it should be at my invitation. What will you drink?—wine?—spirits?”

“Nothing, till we’ve done our business. A cigar I wouldn’t mind.”

The banker opened a cupboard in the writing-table, and put a box of cigars within his guest’s reach. He then took one himself, and lighted it. He half sat on the edge of the table, and smoked a whiff or two; then he laid down the cigar in the ash-receiver. He had become conscious of a strange, tumultuous life welling up in him. It forced him to vibrate in unison with itself; it shook his heart and his lungs, so that his breathing was disturbed. He was grotesquely reminded of how water bubbles in a vacuum; so he, the pressure of orthodox and moral atmospheres being removed, was aware of a spiritual effervescence or exhilaration, not to be entirely concealed. He paced slowly up and down the room, forcing himself to measure his paces, and subdue the impulse to throw out his limbs violently, and to shout aloud. He tried to steady himself by glancing at the familiar contents of the room; but the aspect of all things seemed changed, disordered, and even unreal. He glanced at his own figure in a looking-glass, and was surprised to behold the decorous, succinct evening dress, and the neatly-trimmed beard and accustomed countenance; he did not know what he expected to see; but he felt that this image and himself were ridiculously dissimilar. Outrageous conceptions rioted in his mind, and words of abandoned license stuttered for utterance on the tip of his tongue. Why not utter them? He had summoned a congenial companion; let the foul flood rush forth! But he feared to do this; he had not gaged the limits of this new spirit that had entered into him; it might rend and destroy him. He must keep control of the rudder, no matter whither he steered. He found himself again standing in front of Dexter Gunn, who sat immobile, smoking his cigar. It

seemed to him that years had elapsed since he last spoke to the man. He put forth all his strength, and crushed down the symptoms of insurrection within himself. But when he spoke, his voice sounded in his ears like that of a stranger.

“You’ve done time, of course, Mr. Gunn,” he said, grinning between his teeth. “You know the inside of ‘Copper John’s’? Probably think you know what solitary confinement with hard labor means? Well, you don’t know anything about it; but I know it. I was sentenced fifty years ago, and this is the first hour of liberty I’ve had ever since! What’s more, if all comes out right, it’ll probably be the last. It’s you let down the bars, and after you’ve gone, they’ll put themselves up again.”

“You’re a bit nervous, Mr. Allingham; it’ll wear off,” said Gunn, in his low monotone. “Maybe, if we talked business, it would quiet you down.”

The banker forced himself into a chair. The paroxysm was abating a little.

“Of course, I did all my thinking before sending for you,” he remarked, after a while. “There’ll be no explanations, or sentiment, or rot of any sort. I suppose you’ve guessed what I want of you?”

Gunn made a movement with his thick eyebrows, but remained silent.

“We can speak out, you know,” rejoined the other, with a sneering inflection. “Understand, you’re in no danger here; and neither am I. Go straight from me to the captain of the precinct, if you like, and tell him all I shall tell you; I shall deny it, and it will be the word of Dexter Gunn, expert bank-burglar, against bank-president James Thorpe Allingham’s, the most respected citizen of Pennborough. On the other hand, we can be of use to each other. There’s the situation, in two words.”

“What can I do for you, Mr. Allingham?”

The banker hated the formal address; he would have liked his companion to call him “Jim,” and slap him on the shoulder; yet he was a man



with whom no one had ever ventured to take a liberty. But he was tuned to other music now.

"I want you to rob the Roystone Bank!" he said, letting his voice out harshly.

"Steady!" said Gunn, coldly. "We don't shout in our profession. You'll find etiquette everywhere, Mr. Allingham. I follow my business; but I try to be respectable, in my way. I do what's necessary—no more and no less. I know a little about banks and bankers; you and I are after the same thing, only on different lines. But once in a while you get caught foul, and then you . . . May I put a question?"

"Go ahead!"

"You're insolvent, of course; speculated with the funds, and they're gone; mortgaged your house and furniture; owe three or four times what you can pay. Blinds will be up in another week. All right. Then why don't you skip, in place of calling in me?"

Allingham laughed. "Oh, I've a wife and daughter; and I expect to be a father-in-law next Fall. Besides, I don't care to be beat; I mean to carry on here."

Gunn meditated a moment. "The young lady and gentleman I saw through the door just now?"

The fire reddened through Allingham's eyes. "They're not what we're here to discuss," he said, angrily.

"I'll be the judge of that," returned the other, impassively. "If you care for the girl, or for anybody else, it's an element of risk. If she should suspect anything, and come at you wheedling, maybe you'd give the thing away."

Allingham reflected, and controlled his temper; but a satanic expression twisted across his face. "A risk?" he chuckled. "Well, take it or leave it! If I didn't care for her, you wouldn't be having the biggest chance of your career. Do you think I look so soft?"

"That isn't the trouble with your kind, Mr. Allingham," replied Gunn. "I've seen some of your sort before. When you go crooked, the danger is

of your going too far—until you get used to it. Is this your first job?"

An irrational fury flamed up in the banker; his muscles grew tense, as if for a spring. But he realized his own irrationality, and finally replied, quietly but sardonically: "Oh, Mr. Gunn, you flatter me! No, I'm a virgin."

Gunn meditated again. "I don't like the looks of it over well. What is there in it for me?"

"There's a hundred and sixty-five thousand in the safe to-day," answered Allingham, now finding himself speaking more naturally. "If you can get to it, that's your wages. You must chisel it open, or blow it open, of course; there must be no doubt about the robbery. Then you'll get credit for having taken a couple of millions, and the bank for having lost that amount. I shall call a directors' meeting, and they will vote to make good. How does all that commend itself to your judgment?"

"Does anybody except you and me know of the scheme?" Gunn inquired. "Your Mr. Calverly, for instance?"

"Calverly? You've studied us up a little, I see! But you evidently don't know Calverly. No, if I could have talked to any one else, I wouldn't be talking to you. My rope was a long one, but I've come to the end of it, and I don't mean to hang myself with it. I'd heard of that New York adventure of yours, a year or two ago; and—well, here we are!"

"That's all right. But I could tell you of a banking man, as it might be yourself, being caught like you are, gets a young clerk of his to grab a few hundreds, and skip over to Canada. The bank gives out he got into them to the tune of as many hundred thousand, the directors pony up, and the clerk is taken care of. That's one way. But if your Mr. Calverly isn't that kind of a sport, it wouldn't work."

"And it counts for nothing, from your point of view, that the plan involves the ruining of a clerk; whereas mine only gives a crook another oppor-

tunity to be crooked?" added Allingham, sarcastically.

"Why, as for that, Mr. Allingham," said Gunn, some overt insolence creeping for the first time into his tone, as he folded his hands before him, and held his cigar between his teeth, "if you measure the bank-presidents and the bank-burglars up against each other, I don't know but what you'd find, of the two sorts of crooks, that the bank-presidents were as bad as the burglars, and a good bit meaner and more cowardly. We do our jobs, under the noses of the cops, and we keep ourselves to ourselves, or we get juggled, as may be; you live in your houses and do the society fling, while all the time you're picking the pockets, not only of the rich folks that come to your parties, but of the poor tradesmen whom you're too refined to allow among your acquaintances. And if the cops, or the judges, get wind of you, you know how to fix them; you don't take the chances we do. I'll tell you another thing, Mr. Allingham—and you may as well sit tight and hear me, for I'm your master at any game you can put up in this room to-night, and I don't have the chance every night to chat sociably like this with a gentleman of your standing and intelligence—as I was saying, there's your daughter, a nice-looking young lady, and good, I make no doubt, and going to get married to a nice young doctor, and both of 'em thinking the world of you. Now, I'm called a bad man, and I don't say otherwise, and if you corner me when I'm cracking a crib, and there's no other way out, I'd kill you all in the day's work, and think no more of it. But I saw you to-night, coming from that girl to me, and she kissing her hand after you; and when we're through with our business, you'll go back to her and kiss her good night; and all the while, you're a thief and a crook, with no more right to her good thoughts—barring that you're her father—than I have. You've lived on velvet all your life; been to college, most likely, and had the pick of the best right along from the start. I'm a crook, and have

lived with crooks, and if I've education enough to talk straight, I can thank myself for it. But if a young lady like your daughter was to look and act and feel toward me as she does to you, I should feel queer—I wouldn't want to stand for it. I'll tell what you don't know, and maybe won't believe, but it's truth just the same, we crooks put a limit—we draw the line; it may be low down, but it's there. But a gentleman that goes crooked, like you, Mr. Allingham, draws no line at all; he's rotten clear through, lock, stock and barrel. And between you and me, sociably, here by ourselves, that's what I take you to be. So," added Gunn, taking his cigar from between his teeth, and knocking off the ash into the receiver, "when you talk about the shame of corrupting a poor innocent clerk, and preferring to hire a professional like me, I say to myself, 'This is from the gentleman who feels nothing queer in setting up his rottenness on a pedestal for a good young girl and her intended to worship and fondle and take into their hearts, and giving it out to the folks he's robbing that he's the innocent victim of the robbery.' And that's why I don't take your rebuke so hard as I might otherwise, Mr. Allingham. I shall take on this job, for, as you say, that amount don't often come my way so easy; but if things were to go wrong with you after this, and you came into the profession as a regular, my sort wouldn't want to work with you; you'd have to go down among the pickpockets, if they'd have you. Well, I believe that lets me out."

During the few minutes while Gunn was speaking, Allingham passed up and down a gamut of emotions. A burglar was taking an authoritative tone with him, was criticizing him in an insulting and degrading manner, and was actually reading him a sort of moral lecture. The banker's sense of humor bade him laugh in mockery; his masculine instinct challenged him to resent the attack physically; but in both directions he found himself met by an unfamiliar and alarming im-

tence. Hitherto in his career he had been the master or leader of his associates; but now, having abandoned his own ground for another's, he had found a master in him. The late exhilaration of defying old boundaries had unmasked itself as the fatal inherent weakness of the criminal, increased by that criminal's desire to retain his social prestige. The romance of evil had quickly been replaced by its debasing ugliness. His shield of society was lost, his sword of character blunted, and without these he discovered that his personal equation was helpless. He could do nothing. He dared not even—now that it had gone so far—discontinue the negotiation. Possibly, however, he might find a way to revenge himself secretly or indirectly; and it was with this undefined hope that he went on. His brains at least were left him, and the resource of the defeated—dissimulation.

"You have the best of the argument, Mr. Gunn," he said, pleasantly. "I'm in a hole, and I'm willing to sacrifice anything to get out—except one thing—my social standing, and I regard that mainly for the sake of persons dear to me. No doubt, your position in the matter is more decent than mine; anyhow, you're the man to help me through, and I think the price for your services ought to satisfy you."

Gunn assented with a movement of the lips. "What about the details?" he added.

"I'll give you keys to the doors of the building, and I'll see that the night-watchman is out of the way. You must look after the policeman on the beat yourself; he's an Irishman. The safe you must tackle for yourself; the worse you wreck it the better. As for the time, to-morrow night would suit me."

Gunn took his hat and stood up. "One hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars, you said?"

"There may be a few drafts or deposits to-morrow; but that is about what you'll find there."

Gunn looked him in the eyes for a moment. The banker divined the significance of that look, and it roused a helpless fury in him. But he smiled.

"I'll have to take your word for it," said Gunn, at length, and he turned to go.

"You must drink a glass of wine with me now," said Allingham, bringing a bottle out of the cupboard. He filled two glasses, and lifted his. Gunn did the same; the glasses touched. They drank, and again looked at each other.

"That's good stuff," Gunn remarked, as he set down his glass. "If all goes right, I shall go South after this; you won't hear of me in the profession again. I've had enough. That girl of yours will be the better for this job—but don't let her know!"

"Good luck to you!" said Allingham. He stood twisting his pointed beard, and smiling; he was ready to shake hands, should Gunn offer it. But the latter again turned, and put his hand on the handle of the door. Allingham accompanied him into the hall.

"Papa!" called Olympia's voice, from the drawing-room, "won't your friend come in and have a cup of tea with us?"

"Will you come? Why not?" said Allingham, laying a hand on the other's arm.

Gunn shook the hand off, with a low, surly laugh. That laugh humiliated and enraged Allingham more than anything else that had passed between them that evening. He thought it meant, "And you pretend to care for her!"

As Gunn descended the steps to the street, an unobtrusive, round-shouldered figure passed him, and glanced into his face with a pair of deep-set, steady gray eyes. It was Calverly, who often thus patrolled the sidewalk at night before the house where lived the girl he loved. Gunn gave him no attention, and walked off in the opposite direction. But many years' training at the cashier's window had given Calverly the faculty of quickly stamping a face on his memory, and, though

without suspicions, he never forgot that grim countenance.

#### IV

IN the Arabian fairy-tale, the prince, setting out to journey toward the object of his desire, is attended by two servants, one white, the other black. The former tries to dissuade him from his purpose, assuring him that harm awaits him; the other removes all the obstacles interposed by the first, and whispers to him of gain and pleasure. Between the two, the prince is left free choice; and his choice is evil.

It is an old and a true wisdom that confesses that the path to good is never closed to man, and that in the deepest temptations he is wooed, by all means that do not involve his freedom of action, to take it. Love and honor wooed Allingham during that evening, and the day following. It seemed as if Olympia had never clung so close to him, had never expressed such trust in him and pride in him; at times he could almost have believed that she was acting with knowledge of what impended. She was accustomed to serve his breakfast to him alone in the mornings, Mrs. Allingham rising late; and she spoke of her feeling that love was the greatest thing in the world, and that she and Stephen Bentinck had been telling each other that they meant to do without help from him in their married life, and that the thought of comparative poverty made them happy, because it would keep them more livingly conscious of each other's loving presence and support. "Oh, a few thousand dollars to square the bills at the year's end won't do love any harm, you'll find," returned her father, with an effort to maintain his customary air of good-humored sarcasm; but the girl put her arms round his neck and said, "No, father; I think we think too much of money, or the kind of good it gives us. It does not make us happy. I think you are not always happy, papa, though you have so much money. I love you with all

my heart, but I would love you more if you were poor."

This pure, unselfish atmosphere stifled him. He put her away, laughing between his teeth, and went earlier than usual to the bank. There he found a couple of the directors waiting for him, and for a moment his heart stopped, but they had come to remind him that this was the twenty-fifth anniversary of his conduct of the bank, and that the board of directors requested his presence at a reception that night, when a testimonial of their esteem and confidence would be presented to him. The two gentlemen were very cordial and cheerful, and at parting wrung his hand with most friendly heartiness. "Till to-night!" said they, and he nodded brightly, and thought, "To-night!" Then a voice, so clear that he started at it, seemed to say in his ear, "Confess all to them now—quick, before they are gone!" But he hardened himself, and stood, panting; and it was too late.

At the noon hour, he sent out for some luncheon, deciding not to go home, and presently there was a knock at his room door, and, at his sharp and nervous, "Come in!" Calverly entered. He said, with some hesitations and embarrassed hiatuses, that he cared more for the honor and credit of the bank, and of those concerned with it, than for anything else; that his salary was more than sufficient for all his wants; that he had, indeed, laid by a considerable sum, which had been increased by fortunate investments, and now amounted to about twenty thousand dollars; that he was aware this was relatively an insignificant amount, measured by the financial standards of the bank, but that sometimes even a little space might bridge the distance between safety and danger; that he had not been able to rid himself of the notion that some danger existed; in fact, that certain facts and rumors which had come to his knowledge within the past day or two had led him to apprehend that the bank might even be threatened by some peril from without; and that—but at this point Al-



llingham impatiently broke in upon him.

"For mercy's sake, Calverly, what ails you? Do you know me so little as to come to me with rumors and hearsay? Aren't you satisfied with fancying the bank is going insolvent, but you must now think we're going to be burglarized?—for I don't know what else you can be hinting at. And what's this about your savings. I almost believe you are going to offer them to me to fill the gap your imagination has created? Is that it?"

The cashier reddened painfully, but the intensity of his feeling gave him power to go on. "Please don't be offended, Mr. Allingham; I meant no disrespect or impertinence. The one satisfaction I can have in this world is to be of service to you and yours. Let me pay in this small sum to the credit of the bank. It can do no harm, and it might—it might——"

Allingham interrupted with his mocking laugh; but he saw that the time had come when he must lie, not merely constructively or indirectly, but precisely and definitely. "There, you're a good fellow, and I appreciate it, and all that," he said; "but—sit down here; we'll have this thing out once and for all. I haven't told you this before, because, to be frank with you, it's none of your business; but just in confidence, between you and me, here it is. I have in this drawer"—he laid his hand upon an inner receptacle of his desk—"something like two and a half million of gilt-edged securities, as good as bullion, or better, and this afternoon I shall, with my own hands, put them in the safe and lock them up. The bank has been engaging in large enterprises lately, and I can understand your uneasiness, but we have been especially favored by—well—in some very high quarters indeed, and to-day we are in better shape than we have ever been before. I don't say we're safe, simply; I say we're absolutely invulnerable. Look here, Calverly, I ought to be fired out of office for taking you into my confidence like this—even the directors

don't know the facts—so I'm at the mercy of your discretion! But that face of yours makes me really unhappy. Do, now, for pity's sake, shorten it up again, and come to dinner to-morrow—Stephen is to be in New York, I believe, at a meeting of the Medical Society—and let me hear you talk of something else than my insolvency and your savings! Now get out of here, and leave me to my luncheon."

So that was over, and the banker's spirits revived. He felt strong enough to face the event that was at hand. Heaven had appealed to him on all sides and had been rejected, and he was now attuned to receive advances from an opposite direction.

Calverly, meanwhile, though once more somewhat comforted by Allingham's assurances, could not rid himself of a certain disquiet, occasioned not so much, now, by fears for the financial stability of the Roystone Bank, as by some reports which had reached his ears relative to the suspected presence in town of two or three suspicious characters. The tale had come to him in a roundabout way; an acquaintance of his in an insurance office had told him that he had heard from a friend of his in a detective agency that some well-known crooks had recently left for Pennborough, from New York. The story might not be true, or it might mean nothing, and Calverly had not had the courage to repeat it explicitly to Allingham, but he could not prevent it from haunting his mind. Thus it happened that, near midnight of that pleasant Summer night, his uneasy spirit drove him forth from his lodgings and led him down Walton street, on which the Roystone Bank stood. There was no moon, and soft clouds were drifting in masses across the sky. The bank stood next door to an old brick building, which had been recently vacated by the tenant, and was to be torn down; there was a small courtyard in the rear of it, into which opened a back-door of the bank. A person leaving the bank by this exit, and crossing the yard, could reach the



neighboring cross street through a short alleyway.

A private night-watchman had his post in this region, and there was also a policeman who covered it in his beat every ten or fifteen minutes. After standing in front of the bank for a while, Calverly was surprised to note that neither of these protectors of property made his appearance. At this juncture, the steps of a man walking swiftly were audible coming down Walton street, and the figure became visible rapidly approaching. As he came up, he slackened his gait, and he and Calverly mutually recognized each other. It was Stephen Bentinck, returning home from a professional call.

"Mr. Calverly!" he exclaimed. "Is it a bad conscience, or need of fresh air, that drives you abroad at this hour?"

His full, pleasant voice was welcome in the cashier's ears, for though the young physician was to marry the girl that Calverly loved, the latter's honest heart had never borne him a grudge, and had always recognized his manly and winning qualities.

"I feel uncomfortable about the bank, Dr. Bentinck," he said, in tones that faltered a little. "I heard that there was a party of thieves come to town; the night-watchman and the patrolman are both absent, and I can't help thinking there may be something wrong."

Bentinck gave him a frank, penetrating look and smile.

"You don't mean you think there are burglars in there now?"

"I was thinking that perhaps I would as well step in and see, doctor."

"In that case, hadn't you better let me come with you?" said Bentinck. "Two knights-errant are better than one, in such a case, and I used to be good at a scrap when I was in college. Have you got the keys? Come on!"

"Well, I'm sure it's very kind of you, doctor," replied the cashier. "Of course, I suppose it's only my foolishness, but, if you don't mind, I suppose it can do no harm." And so saying, he unlocked the door of the bank, and he and Bentinck entered.

## V

DEXTER GUNN had made his dispositions with the prudence and circumspection of an experienced general. The watchman had been disposed of, as agreed, by Allingham; the policeman, Tom MacBride, had been beguiled away by a smart-looking young Irishman, who wished to consult with him as to the best way to get on the force. The aspirant had money, and seemed anxious to spend it, and MacBride and he spent several very important hours in the back parlor of a neighboring hostelry. The outside coast being thus cleared, Gunn, with a single assistant, waited his opportunity to get into the bank unobserved, and immediately set to work on the safe. It was an imposing-looking fortress, but, as the burglars saw at a glance, not built according to the latest ideas in safe-architecture. Nothing would be needed beyond the screw and the jack; the men worked hard and eagerly, sweat pouring from their faces in the confined room, for burglary keeps both body and mind on the stretch. In less than fifteen minutes, the massive door yawned open, and before them lay fortune, and a life of ease and comfort in Mexico or Chili.

"This is too easy!" muttered Gunn's companion, wiping his forehead. "Seems almost a shame to take the money!"

"Get hold of it first," Gunn answered. "I don't half believe in that silver-headed old scoundrel, yet!"

For the next few minutes no words were spoken; the two men were busy opening drawers and boxes and pulling over bundles of papers. There were documents enough, but as yet neither negotiable bonds nor bank-notes.

"Here's three hundred in fives, to begin with!" exclaimed the pal, tearing open a small package, and running over the contents between his thumb and finger.

"Three hundred!" returned Gunn, in a grim whisper. "Where's the rest of it?"

Once more they pursued their search, with growing dismay and rage. In a short time, the big safe stood empty. Everything in it had been examined in vain. There was nothing else of value—nothing! Three hundred dollars was the total of the booty!

As the men realized this, they stared in each other's faces. The pal uttered a curse. Gunn rose to his feet.

"It was a clever trick, Mr. James Thorpe Allingham," he said, in a very gentle voice. "But it will cost you something, and that I promise you." He brushed the dust from his hands and trousers, and began to pick up the tools. "You're having your health drunk at the directors' meeting at this minute. I'll give you blood to drink before you get home."

"They're on to us!" cried the other, hoarsely in his throat, making a leap to close the door of the partition; but he was not in time.

Stephen Bentinck, supple and athletic, had his shoulder against the panel, and exerting his strength, forced the door back against the burglar. The latter aimed a blow at him with the jimmy; Stephen evaded it, and it struck Calverly, who was close behind, a glancing blow on the head, knocking him down and partly stunning him. The fellow turned and fled through the back entrance, and so out through the yard and alley, leaving Dexter Gunn to shift for himself.

"Do you resist arrest?" demanded Stephen. His eyes glowed, his kindly, handsome face was alight, the blood of battle was singing in his veins. His heart was steeled for a struggle, but far in the depths of it was the image of Olympia, and his love for her.

"Keep clear of me, young fellow," said Gunn, quietly. "It's not you I wish to hurt. Let me go peaceably. There's been no harm done here."

Stephen, confident in his skill as wrestler and boxer, stepped warily forward. Then he saw Gunn's hand move toward his pistol pocket, and leaped at him. They strained together for a few moments; Gunn was far the stronger, but Bentinck had the

science of the game. There was a sudden twist and whirl, and the burglar was down, with Bentinck on top of him. His hands were on Gunn's windpipe; and the latter, at the same moment, saw Calverly rising unsteadily to his feet. Gunn's right arm, as he fell, had been twisted under his back. With a furious heave of his body, he got it out, and found his revolver.

"Let me out!" he growled.

"You're my prisoner," panted Stephen.

Then the burglar pressed the mouth of the revolver against the other's heart, and fired. Stephen held himself up for an instant, then fell, relaxed, across his antagonist's body. Gunn rolled him to one side, and rose. Calverly, uttering a cry, staggered toward him. Gunn, with a sidewise swing of the foot, knocked the cashier's legs from under him, and he fell headlong. With a gloomy glance at the body of his other assailant, he turned and passed out.

Calverly, dragging himself dizzily to his knees, found himself alone with the dead. He shook his head confusedly from side to side.

"Why couldn't he have killed me!" he groaned. "I knew him—I knew him! and oh, God, now I know it all!"

## VI

IN Allingham's overcoat pocket, as he walked home from the reception at half-past twelve that night, was a golden salver, beautifully wrought, with an inscription testifying to the honor and esteem in which his friends held him. It was to be handed down as an heirloom to the latest generations of his happy posterity. Allingham had appeared in excellent spirits and form that evening, and had made one of his wittiest speeches in response to the address of the donors. Now, as he stepped briskly down the elm-shadowed street, he glanced at his watch. Was that job at the bank accomplished yet? On an impulse of characteristic audacity, he determined

to go home by way of the bank—it was not much further—and have a look at the building. He turned down Webster street, and soon came to the northeast corner of Walton. A man was walking rapidly away from him, down the side street from the bank. It was Dexter Gunn, but Allingham could not recognize him at that distance. Had Gunn happened to walk in the other direction, the two men would have met, and Gunn was in a murderous mood. But fate had arranged things otherwise.

As Allingham came opposite the bank, he paused a moment, and eyed it curiously. Had his friends the burglars yet discovered the trick he had played upon them? It had been played on the spur of a moment—an inspiration to pay off the grudge against the fellow who had insulted him. Gunn would have to swallow his medicine; he would dare make no complaint. Meanwhile, the money thus stolen from the thief could be usefully applied to his own expenses during the coming few weeks of turmoil and excitement. He chuckled to himself. The bank appeared quiet and undisturbed, and Allingham walked on. At that moment, Calverly, within, was summoning energy to grope his way out from the wrecked safe and the dead body, and give the alarm. But before he could do this, Allingham had passed out of hearing.

On reaching home, he let himself in softly, and went to his room. For some hours he was wakeful, thinking of the immediate future, and preparing the rôle he would have to play. There would be much vain hue and cry, meetings of the directors, great sympathy and condolence; finally, reorganization, and himself as president once more. It would be rather amusing. Then, in the Fall, Olympia's wedding. Perhaps, after they had started on their wedding journey, he himself would slip away for a few months' vacation in Europe, to rest himself from the shock and fatigue of the calamity. There was a smile on the banker's face as he fell, at length, into a heavy sleep.

Olympia, who always rose early, was awake sooner than usual this morning. She went out on the front porch, to smell the roses that clambered over the trellis, and with a hope in her heart, too, that Stephen might be passing—as he sometimes did—and then they would exchange a kiss and a few words, and she would give him the loveliest of the roses.

She selected and plucked the rose, but Stephen did not come. Presently, however, the newspaper-boy came hurrying up the drive, with papers under his arm. As he caught sight of Olympia, he gave her a strange, frightened glance, tossed a paper to her feet, and then set off again at top speed.

Amused at his aspect and behavior, she picked up the paper, and smoothed it out, ready for her father's perusal; he liked to have her bring him the morning paper. As the poor girl opened it, the black headlines, crowding across the top of the first page, caught her eye. She read them, and became very still.

Something must be wrong with her eyes—with her head. She had never before been affected in this way. Her arms, too, seemed like lead, and her fingers were numb. With an effort, she lifted the paper once more, and again fixed her eyes on the page. How the words danced! She could not make them stand still. She remained staring at them a long time.

At last, with a low, whimpering cry, she stretched out her arms, and murmuring: "Stephen—papa—help—help me!" she turned to reënter the open door. On the threshold she fell prone, with the rose in her bosom, and the paper open beside her.

Allingham sat in his study, and Calverly stood before him. A week had passed since the robbery of the Roystone Bank. The inquest, at which Calverly had given testimony, had taken place; the police had begun their futile pursuit of the murderer; Stephen Bentinck's funeral had been held, and now the former cashier and the presi-

dent faced each other in an interview which the former had requested.

"Sit down, won't you, Calverly?" said Allingham, in a dull, indifferent voice. "You know I don't see callers now, but I made an exception in your case, because . . . I suppose you've come to ask about the reorganization. That's a question for the directors to settle. I presume it will take place ultimately. I'm not able to think of these matters at present. Mrs. Allingham has been laid up ever since—and Olympia . . . I'm anxious about her . . . But, sit down."

"I'll stand, if you please, Mr. Allingham," replied the cashier. "I have some statements to make to you—some statements which I ought to make to you, I think—which I did not think it right to make at the inquest."

"Oh, I have nothing to do with that," said Allingham, wearily. "You should go to the chief of police. I am making no investigations."

"I should say, in the first place," continued Calverly, not noticing the banker's words, "that whether the bank resumes or not, I sha'n't be in it any more."

"Really? Well—oh, you want a recommendation? All right, I'll—"

"I want nothing from you, Mr. Allingham. I—" his voice failed him, but after a pause he went on—"I want to speak of the night before the robbery. You had a caller here that night. You received him in this room, alone."

There came a singing in Allingham's ears, and a sensation of nausea; his nerves had been failing him of late. He could not keep a faintness out of his voice as he replied: "Was there? Did I? Possibly; I often see persons here. What—?"

"I was passing the side door into the street as he came out. I saw his face, Mr. Allingham—I saw it distinctly. I could not have forgotten it in years. But it was only a little over twenty-four hours when I saw him again. I knew him! Oh, I knew him!"

An irrepressible tremor, which he strove to disguise by grasping the arms of his chair, passed through Allingham's body. "You saw him—?"

"I recognized him as he stood up after shooting Dr. Bentinck through the heart. I could have begged him to shoot me. For I understood it all then; and I'd rather have been dead. I had always believed in you, and looked up to you. Oh, my God!"

The passion that trembled hoarsely in his usually mild and subdued tones rang through the room, and struck cold on the banker's heart. But the innate courage of the man rose, after a few moments, to meet the deadly emergency. He sat erect in his chair.

"Let us understand each other, Calverly. I comprehend your insinuation. What do you intend to do? Do you wish to profit by this information—this—?"

The cashier put up his trembling hands. "Oh, Mr. Allingham—oh, Mr. Allingham! Nothing you've ever known of me gives you the right to make that suggestion. I pretend to have no evidence that could be used against you in law; but if I had, what would be the difference? No law that man has made can punish you. You and I and that murderer know what you are, and what you've done; no one else will ever know it. You are her father—you are her father, Mr. Allingham. She must never suspect—she must always believe in you. I would kill you myself, rather than she should suspect. But I felt it was right that you should know that I know you. I couldn't keep it to myself—I had to tell you. The murderer must escape; if he were captured, the truth would come out. You must protect the man who killed your daughter's husband that was to be. You must go through life being honored and trusted by everybody, for her sake. You mustn't commit suicide, Mr. Allingham, for that would be confession. Every night and every morning, you must let that girl put her arms round your neck and kiss you, and believe in

you, and you must pretend that you deserve it. What is the use of our talking about human law? What could human law ever do to you, Mr. Allingham, to be compared with what you've done to yourself? You are dead and in hell already, and yet you must live, and make that angel believe that you are worthy to be her father."

He stopped abruptly; and the emotion which had given fire to his dull eyes and dignity to his homely and common features dropped from him like a prophet's mantle. He seemed visibly to dwindle and grow cold.

"That's all, I think, Mr. Allingham," he said, uncertainly. "I don't quite know what I've said; but I believe that is all. I shall remain an inhabitant of this town, for I don't wish to be where she couldn't reach me, if she needed my help. But you won't see any more of me, Mr. Allingham, so I bid you good day."

He had moved away, and got to the door, when Allingham spoke.

"Good-bye, Calverly. I've always thought you a poor, feeble creature,

and despised you. But some power, greater than we are, has given it to you to put me to shame and crush me down. You're quite right about it all. I'm glad you found me out, too. It's a comfort to have one human being know that I'm a hypocrite, and a coward, and a scoundrel. I'd have gone cracked, otherwise, I believe. Good thing that you're going to stay in town. I shall look you up once in a while, just to feel that you know me still. Yes, it'll be a hard job to keep that halo of mine in commission; but I promise you I'll do it, till it kills me. Well, good-bye."

Mr. Allingham survived his honors and prosperity three years more; he seemed a very old man when he died. When death came, he met it with a smile that was almost a laugh. His wife and daughter are still living, much devoted to charities. Calverly calls on them occasionally; they see very little of society. In Olympia's room are pictures of her father and of Stephen Bentinck, and she always keeps fresh flowers blooming before them.



## LIGHTS

I'D seen the golden sunlight robe  
 The world with splendor rare;  
 I only knew its gladness when  
 I saw it in your hair.  
 I'd watched the moonlight kiss the sea  
 And bathe the sleeping land;  
 I only knew its beauty when  
 It gleamed upon your hand.

I'd seen the faint, wan starlight work  
 Its miracle of grace;  
 I only knew its softness when  
 It shone upon your face.  
 I'd watched the lovelight dawn with smiles,  
 I'd watched it pale with sighs;  
 I only knew its sweetness when  
 I found it in your eyes.

RICHARD STILLMAN POWELL.



## THE COLUMBINES

WE are the Columbines who, night by night,  
 Dance for your pleasure in the garish light,  
 Red-lipped, with swift, white feet that know no pause,  
 With laughter over-loud and eyes too bright,  
 To win your listless, cynical applause.

We are the Columbines to whom you call  
 For jest and merriment and carnival,  
 Buying our gladness at the market price,  
 Tossing the careless coin to one and all,  
 Scorning the purchase with a wit too nice.

We are the Columbines who may not grieve,  
 Whom no man asks to pardon or believe,  
 Who have no tears, no sorrow, no regret—  
 A mimic Juliet you kiss and leave,  
 The rose of yesterday you soon forget.

We are the Columbines who sometimes turn  
 To watch your windows where the home lights burn,  
 Feeling the woman's shadow on the pane  
 Fall on our hearts that take too long to learn  
 Their lesson of light laughter, light disdain.

We are the Columbines, life's bubbles blown  
 Hither and thither, crimson poppies sown  
 For beauty and forgetfulness—no more;  
 Ours but to give, never to gain or own,  
 To know our poverty and laugh therefor.

We are the Columbines—my masters, see,  
 Dance we not well?—laugh we not merrily?  
 Beautiful, soulless, blooming but a day,  
 Ah, who would not the moment's Pierrot be  
 To laugh and kiss—and yawn and turn away!

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



## A SERIOUS OPERATION

FIRST M.D.—I operated on old Tightun to-day.

SECOND M.D.—Serious?

“You bet! Don't believe he'll ever get over it.”

“What was it?”

“Collected my bill.”

# DORA NANI

Par Robert Scheffer

**F**RÊLE et pâle, dans son inusable robe de deuil, son paroissien à la main, Mme veuve Dolland se dirigeait, selon son habitude quotidienne, vers sa chapelle préférée, quand, au tournant de la rue, une affiche insolite força son regard. Dans la ville de Z..., chef-lieu de troisième classe, tout fait événement. Les distractions y sont rares. Les murs mêmes s'y ennuiant. Une pancarte enluminée qui, d'aventure, égaye leur nudité, est l'objet de commentaires. Mme veuve Dolland s'approcha pour mieux voir. Elle eut un éblouissement; de ses mains tremblantes, le paroissien s'échappa. Pé-niblement, elle le ramassa; puis, maîtrisant son trouble, se contraignit de regarder encore. Elle avait bien lu:

## DORA NANI

et c'était elle, Dora Nani, la tragédienne célèbre, cette grande femme, épaules et gorge nues, mais parées de joyaux, drapant d'une étrange robe couleur de sang caillé ses formes impudiques, dont l'image envahissait le programme...

— L'horrible, l'horrible créature!... murmurait Mme Dolland.

S'éloignant enfin, elle n'alla pas à la chapelle, mais, rentrée dans son pauvre logis, pleura...

Son fils unique était mort pour cette femme. Et voici qu'on allait applaudir, dans la petite ville même où la mère s'était retirée, celle qui lui avait brisé le cœur.

Pourquoi fallait-il que, distraite de ses pensées pieuses, elle eût levé les yeux sur la fatale affiche! Sinon, elle eût tout ignoré, eût continué à vivre, triste, recluse et résignée, et priant pour le salut de celui qui s'était sui-

cidé. Tandis que, maintenant... c'était le passé qui ressuscitait avec ses angoisses, ses révoltes et du désespoir. Et le public acclamerait cette criminelle Dora Nani, ignorant—et s'en soucierait-il, s'il le savait?—que la mère dépossédée versait des larmes à cause d'elle.

Son fils, son unique, comme elle l'avait chéri, tout en tremblant pour lui qui était délicat, impressionnable, excessif de bonne heure dans ses idées, et dans ses actes. Précocement veuve, pour assurer son éducation, elle s'était, souvent, privée du nécessaire. Et, tout en s'effrayant de son esprit aventureux, elle était fière de ses progrès rapides, des éloges qu'on lui faisait de sa jolie mine et de l'intelligence qu'on lui reconnaissait... Puis, ç'avait été le départ pour Paris. Oh! comme d'un geste qui implorait, elle l'avait béni, au moment où il la quittait!... Hélas! vite il s'était dévoyé. Au lieu d'études sérieuses, il s'adonnait aux frivolités de la littérature, fréquentait les théâtres qu'il faut réprouver, approchait les créatures de perdition et se liait avec elles... Aux doléances de sa mère, il répondait par des phrases qui la désolaient, sur la brièveté de l'existence, l'incertitude de ce qui suit, l'enthousiasme que provoque la beauté, et affirmait qu'elle seule mérite notre culte. Même, ne la plaignait-il pas de ce que de la vie, elle ne connût que l'austérité et l'inutile devoir, au lieu qu'il faut admirer la lumière qui rayonne, boire la joie qui coule vers nous, s'enivrer de toutes les voluptés que la nature nous prodigue? Si bien avait-il pratiqué ces maximes, qu'entraîné dans le vice, pour subvenir aux exigences de cette Dora Nani, il avait compromis

son honneur, avait volé, avait cherché dans la mort un refuge contre la honte... Mais quelle femme était-ce donc que la Nani, pour qu'elle eût exercé une séduction telle sur le jeune homme, qu'il lui eût tout sacrifié, sa pureté, son honnêteté, sa vie?...

Mme Dolland se le demandait, et l'image tout à l'heure entrevue l'obsédait. Au travers de son affliction, elle se dessinait prestigieuse; elle s'animait, se penchait vers elle, lui chuchotait des paroles. Mme Dolland fit un geste comme pour l'écarter. Derrière ses paupières baissées, elle l'aperçut, plus distincte, et qui la sollicitait. Elle lui faisait signe. Elle murmurait: "Tu n'as qu'à prendre ta place au théâtre. Tu verras, tu sauras, tu jugeras..." Tentation du démon qu'il fallait repousser. La tentation gagnait en force, Mme Dolland faiblissait dans sa résistance. Toute la journée, qui fut longue, la lutte dura.

... Au soir, la veuve, qui avait cru devoir faire un brin de toilette, quelques dentelles anciennes rajoutées aux manchettes et au col, parut, après beaucoup d'autres, au guichet. Le prix du strapontin lui parut exorbitant; elle le paya, avec des remords de ne point faire aumône de cet argent au tronc des pauvres. Et, se promettant de se confesser le lendemain, elle s'achemina, avec des hésitations, vers la salle de spectacle.

La splendeur du lieu l'impressionna. Tout, ici, lui était neuf. Par principe autant que par nécessité, Mme Dolland n'avait jamais visité un théâtre. Elle salua cérémonieusement l'ouvreuse, s'excusa auprès de ses voisins. Intimidée, elle considérait les loges, le lustre, le mystère du rideau baissé. De la musique la charma, en même temps qu'elle l'énervait. Quoique son cœur battît très fort, elle n'éprouvait pas l'émotion douloureuse qu'elle redoutait, plutôt une sorte de curiosité fébrile qu'elle se reprochait: "Mon fils, mon fils, que disait-il?" songeait-elle. Et, furtivement, afin que le ciel lui pardonnât, elle égrenait son chapelet.

Les trois coups retentirent; le ri-

deau se leva. En même temps, un souffle d'air froid se répandit de la scène sur la salle. Mme Dolland frissonna.

Un paysage de féerie se révéla. Aux rayons du soleil couchant, le lac s'empourprait. La colonnade d'un palais blanc en longeait le bord. Sur le degré parut la princesse. La claque faisait tumulte. Attendant le silence, Dora Nani se maintenait dans une attitude modeste, et comme étrangère à l'ovation qu'on lui faisait, perdue dans un rêve, les yeux tristes interrogeant l'espace vide. Ses beaux bras nus émergeaient de la robe blanche où les rayons du soleil agonisant mettaient d'inquiétantes, de rouges lueurs...

Mme Dolland n'avait jamais rien imaginé de pareil. La scène lui apparaissait plus belle qu'une église à l'Adoration. Dora Nani, dans l'aurore de ses légers cheveux blonds, dans sa tunique d'innocence qu'éclaboussait le sang du soleil, était une sainte qui tirait les larmes des yeux.

Mme Dolland s'en voulut de la comparaison. Elle tenta de résister à l'attrait qu'elle subissait. Mais Dora Nani parla. Le timbre de sa voix était grave avec douceur. Cela caressait, cela troublait, cela enchantait. Mme Dolland fut subjuguée. Dora Nani fit quelques pas; l'harmonie de ses mouvements la fit paraître plus belle qu'au repos. Mme Dolland ne la quitta plus des yeux. Aux allées et venues des autres personnages, au dialogue, à peine si elle prêtait attention. Tout l'intérêt de la pièce se concentrait pour elle dans la seule Dora Nani, et elle l'admirait.

A la chute du rideau, Mme Dolland applaudit... Dans l'entr'acte, elle ne bougea point de sa place. Elle était comme dans un rêve, éprouvait des sensations indéfinissables où de la joie et de l'amertume se confondaient. Il lui semblait qu'elle apprît, maintenant seulement le sens de la vie... Elle se disait: "Mon fils a connu Dora Nani," et elle en concevait une sorte d'orgueil mêlé de douleur.

Aux actes suivants, et, à mesure que

le drame se déroulait, elle s'éprenait davantage de l'artiste. Elle la voyait par les yeux de son fils. Elle croyait entendre celui-ci lui dire: "La beauté, seule, mérite notre culte!" Et, bouleversées toutes ses croyances de naguère, elle l'approuvait...

Aussi, lorsque Dora Nani, pour terminer la pièce, vint merveilleusement expirer en présence du public, Mme Dolland sanglota-t-elle:

— Comme elle doit souffrir! songeait-elle. Sans doute, quand elle meurt ainsi; elle se rappelle celui qui l'aima tant que de mourir pour sa beauté. Et c'est une sorte de châtiment qu'elle s'inflige à elle-même, que de fréquemment passer par les affres de l'agonie...

En son âme simple, Mme Dolland pensait ainsi; et il est permis d'en sourire. Mais Mme Dolland ignorait que la vie est une comédie, qu'un peu de tragédie pimente...

Trop fortes avaient été les émotions de la soirée pour que la pauvre femme

pût dormir. Elle ne se coucha même point; mais, dans sa chambrette, très agitée, remémorait ses impressions qui se compliquaient de scrupules.

Elle entreprit d'écrire à Dora Nani. Mais que dire et que ne pas dire? Elle fit des brouillons qu'elle surchargea de ratures. Ses pensées étaient contradictoires. Dora Nani, si belle... son fils... le culte de la beauté... la religion... le devoir... Mme Dolland se perdait dans un monde de réflexion, à mesure que ses sensations s'effaçaient.

A l'aube, elle s'apaisa. Et, ayant tracé sur sa carte de visite cette ligne: *Une mère qui vous pardonne*, elle la mis sous enveloppe, rédigea l'adresse, puis sortit, et jeta la lettre dans la prochaine boîte.

Ensuite, comme la veille, elle se dirigea vers la chapelle; en passant, ne regarda point l'affiche. Et, s'agenouillant devant l'autel, première venue, elle pria fervemment, pour elle-même, pour son fils, pour Dora Nani...



## THE VEIL

BELOVED, let my dark hair cover thee—  
 Aye, veil thy face from my long-gazing eyes;  
 For I am weary as the daylight dies  
 Into the shadow—the uncertainty  
 Wherein the world is veiled. Be thou to me  
 The undiscovered guerdon, the far prize  
 That waits the soul's endeavor—till I rise  
 At morning and unveil the mystery.

Beloved, as I hide thee in my hair,  
 So has my passion covered thee with dream  
 And soul-alluring glamour. Wouldst thou dare  
 To face my naked spirit in supreme  
 And blinding revelation? Oh, beware!  
 Love's veils are more essential than they seem.

ELSA BARKER.



## VERY EXCLUSIVE

"MRS. HIGBLOWER moves in the best society, doesn't she?"  
 "Very best; she hasn't a friend in the world."

## THE RIFT IN THE LUTE

UPON the cheeks of cherries  
 One notes a deepening blush,  
 And finds his rustic ferries  
 Are fringed with flag and rush.  
 Each day more tall and lusty  
 My slips and seedlings grow,  
 And on the highways dusty  
 Are sprinkling-carts, I know.  
 The dullest ways of earth are  
 Once more replete with grace,  
 And mortals full of mirth are—  
 For Summer comes apace.

The calamus is budding,  
 The locust groves are gay;  
 Craft newly-launched are scudding  
 About the tranquil bay.  
 By noon half town is yawning;  
 Fans frequently are priced,  
 And golfers 'neath an awning  
 Of red sip something iced.  
 I heard mosquitos hymning  
 To-night, and at the weir  
 I saw some boys in swimming—  
 Yes, Summer's almost here!

The thirsty sign, "*Cold Soda,*  
*All Flavors,*" reappears;  
 With ragtime on each road a  
 New hurdy-gurdy cheers.  
 The sewing-room's all sallies—  
 I just glanced in! From piles  
 Of smart foulards and challis  
 I caught the sweetest smiles.  
 But I—I looked my sternest,  
 For me what hopes uncloze?  
 When Summer comes in earnest,  
 Alas! Milady goes!

EDWARD W. BARNARD.



## THE TEST

"ISN'T she a lady?"  
 "Surely! She works for ten servants."



# THE WORLD AT PLAY

By Harold Fielding

THE facts of fun are serious. To explain humor is to spoil it; to define wit is to destroy it. No one has ever constructed a laughable definition of laughter's cause. Other definitions may amuse; this, never. Johnson defined patriotism as the last resort of a scoundrel. So the Irishman, when asked to define his native bull, said:

"Well, when you see thirteen cows lying down in a field and one of them is standing up, that's a bull."

Such ingenuity and humor are not for the explanation of laughter.

The real secret of life is as mysterious in fun as it is in the human body. Yet there are working theories in plenty, though none is complete. The best of these is that which makes humor consist in the discrepancy between the real and the ideal in certain cases. Thus a man is particularly pompous, and struts the street with magisterial mien calculated to awe all beholders. He steps on a bit of orange peel, his hat flies off, his heels fly up, he sits down with tremendous earnestness—and we laugh! He may have broken leg or neck, but our first act is to laugh at him. It is the quick and complete contrast between his present antics and that ideal sedateness and majesty his first appearance had suggested. His performance is funny. It is replete with humorous quality for all except himself.

So much, briefly, for a theory of humor. One is as good as another; none is of any value.

As to wit, it requires the intellectual. Sometimes the feather of wit tickles our ribs with invented humor; some-

times the flash of it lights the mind cheerily, while leaving the body unaffected.

If I were to attempt the making of an original distinction between wit and humor, I should say that wit has its foundation in the mental, while humor is of the senses. But, of a truth, there is no fine distinction between the two, and those that insist most on the divergences between them are they that most confuse us. Wit has its source in the intellect, while humor is generated in the emotions—as so often in surprise; or the two combine, as in a humorous scene where unconscious wit also enters. Thus, the mistress of the house, on entering the dining-room suddenly, found her butler helping himself to a glass of old port.

"James, I *am* surprised," said the indignant lady.

"So be I, mum!" was the answer.

I shall say no more in the way of explanation. One of the saddest books I ever read was entitled, "Why We Laugh." It is enough for our happiness that wit is wit, humor is humor, and that by them is begotten our pet child, laughter, whose charms are constant whenever she nestles in our bosom.

But there is one field where exploration yields certainty. It has been my pleasure incidentally to study the humor of various nations and literatures. In each, one finds some elements common to people everywhere, and one finds, too, other elements that are idiosyncratic, peculiar to the particular peoples. Precisely as we discover the roots of the Latin tongue

among all the Romance languages, with varying forms and idioms in each racial variation, so we observe the foundations of humor everywhere alike, while its object, or its method of exploitation, changes at every frontier. It is said that all jokes are transmutations from seven originals familiar in the times of the Pharaohs. The saying is essentially true. But the world is still deceived by ornament, as Shakespeare has it, so we fix on certain phases of the original fun as distinctive of the country where it is so decked out. And, at the very outset, we learn that, as every individual has his own point of view, so has every nation—in its humor as in all else. The African savages, told by the missionary that the world is round, not flat, roared with laughter. The absurdity of the saying—as they thought it—was most amusing. The religious world of Galileo's time did not laugh when he said the same thing, because, while the statement was equally absurd, it was, too, blasphemous, and the pious were shocked by what they deemed sacrilege. We, in our country, submit to the rule of a president without too many smiles—sometimes, if we are not of his party, almost with tears. But it is said that one emperor of Japan died from laughter because he was told the Americans ruled themselves, without a king over them. The silliness of the idea so tickled the Son of Heaven that he shook with merriment until he shook the soul out of his body. Indeed, we take seriously, as facts of every-day life, many things of which the prophecy would have caused our forebears to explode with derisive chuckles. It is that law of contrast, between the real as we know it and the ideal suggested to us, that amuses, however multiform the disguises the contrast may assume. For this reason, humor is always individual to the person or the nation. What amuses one amuses another or not, according to whether or not the point of view of the two be approximately the same. The lack of sympathy between nations, in their manner of looking at things, is

the reason why a journalist could never make a good living by translating jokes. Some have tried and—starved.

German humor, for example, is usually profound, of the abstract, metaphysical, having to do with the reason of things. A small boy was walking down Unter den Linden in Berlin, with his mother, when they passed a young ladies' school, out for the promenade. The misses walked two by two in procession. First came the youngest, in skirts to their knees; behind came those a little older, in skirts slightly lengthened; the next were still older, their skirts longer; and so on to the last of the procession, whose skirts reached to the pavement. The little boy gazed inquiringly into his mother's face, and said:

"Mama, why do the girls' legs grow shorter as they grow older?"

Austrian humor is much like the German, but it is not so characteristic.

The Turk, on the other hand, is always moralizing in his jokes—whatever he may be in his serious moments. Witness the famous tale of a neighbor who came to Nasir Eddin, and asked the loan of a rope.

"I have used my only piece of rope to tie up some flour," Nasir answered, blandly.

"But you cannot tie up flour with a rope!" the other urged.

"I can do anything with a rope," Nasir replied, "when I don't wish to lend it."

Again, another neighbor came to borrow Nasir Eddin's ass.

"I am truly sorry," Nasir explained, "but my ass is not here; it has gone to the market."

At this moment, the ass brayed in the stable.

"Ho!" cried the neighbor, "you have spoken falsely. I hear it bray."

"What!" cried Nasir, indignantly, "do you dare to take the word of an ass in preference to mine?"

And here is a Turkish story of which adaptations have gone all over the world:

Eddin put up a sign over a field on

his property, to the effect that he would give the land to any one really contented. When an applicant came, Eddin said:

"O follower of the prophet, art thou really contented?"

And the man answered in the affirmative. Then Eddin dismissed him with the words:

"Since you are really contented, you do not wish my field."

The French, on the contrary, are not given over to moralizing in their wit or in their humor. It is curiously true of the nation that while it abounds in caustic wit and satire, it lacks somewhat in thoroughly wholesome humor. Indeed, I can call to mind but one perfect example of humor undeformed. That was a picture of a trombone-player. The artist shows us a huge man with massive head and an enormous shock of hair. He brandishes his trombone furiously toward a cage in which is seen a canary bird, and he shouts in rage at the tiny biped:

"Oh, thousand thunders! Just as I was about to represent with the velvety notes of my instrument, the soft twittering of birds, you had to interrupt with your infernal din!" The contrast between the fact, and that which the trombonist utters is admirable.

But let us turn to something illustrative of the usual cynical flavor of the French wit. A typical story, that has been adopted into other countries, is that of the preacher in Paris, who said:

"I see in this congregation a woman who has been guilty of disobedience to her husband. In order to point her out, I will fling my breviary at her head."

The priest lifted his book, and every female head instantly ducked.

But much distinctive wit in the French cannot be translated, and it is well that it cannot. The Gallic taste is occasionally like that of a Frenchman, who expressed his admiration for animals in this form of broken English:

"I am zo fond of ze dogs, of ze cats,

of ze 'osses and ze asses; I do love zo much everyt'ing dat ees beastly."

The Dutch are rarely sarcastic. They are, as a rule, rather ponderous in their humor, as they are in the size of their legs. Their wit is as heavy as their faces. Their jokes are as badly cut as their floppy trousers. For two hundred years Holland and Zealand were bitterly at feud over a question that arose between two guests at a banquet. And what do you think was the cause of a strife so bitter? Merely this:

"Does the hook take the cod, or does the cod take the hook?"

Spain lost her wit and most of her humor long before she lost her colonies. Cervantes caricatured all the world of chivalry when he wrote "Don Quixote," but most of all he exploited the grotesque absurdity of the Spaniard himself. In that great work the wit and humor of Spain are forever enshrined. Since Cervantes no Spaniard has had the brains and industry to be very great in wit and humor. The humorous papers of Madrid are the dreariest periodicals in the world.

In Italy, again, there is little of pure fun, though there is an abundance of buffoonery.

We turn with relief to the clean merriment of the three islands of the United Kingdom. Here we find the rollicking fun of Ireland, the staid wit of England, the canny humor of Scotland. It is our custom to laugh at English dullness, but the English are not dull; they are merely different. They are slow sometimes, but very sure. When one comes in close contact with the English, he finds that their wit and humor are at once pervasive and admirable. Some of the best witticisms have come from the badinage of a London cabby, others from the lips of the empire's late prime minister, Lord Salisbury. Often the Englishman is slow to see an American joke, but he is shrewd enough to appreciate his own—and what more would you have? For that matter, we are often slow to see his! We must not think that Irish wit is made up wholly of bulls, that it requires a sur-

gical operation to get a joke into a Scotchman's head, that the English only laugh two weeks after the story is told. Curiously enough, English humor is often of that sort we call distinctly American. When it is not, we may call it dull, but in so doing we are unjust.

We must not expect the English to be quite so abnormally quick as are the Americans. Our national hustle is in our fun as in all things else. We cannot, every one, think alike on so serious a matter as is mirth. Pope said that our sense of humor is like our watches; no two go just alike, but each believes in his own.

Next to American, English humor is the most comprehensive in the world. Often, indeed, it encroaches on America's peculiar field—grotesque and absurd exaggeration. Thus, it was Thackeray, and not an American joker, who described an oyster as so large that it required two men to swallow it whole. Hood, too, though intensely English in his fun, was often given to what are to-day called Americanisms. He declared that a certain woman was so deaf that she might have worn a percussion-cap and have been knocked on the head without hearing it snap. But this quality of English wit is best brought out in the colonies, where the conditions of life make its resemblance to American drollness more than ever apparent. In Canada it is told that a Bridget went to a clergyman, and asked what was the fee to be married. "A dollar and a half," was the answer. A week later Bridget reappeared, and gave the clergyman the dollar and a half.

"But where is the man?" the clergyman asked.

"What!" cried the dismayed domestic, "don't you find the man for a dollar and a half?"

This sounds like one of our own stories.

Dickens was typically English in his humor; his fun was always without sting. A characteristic story of his, and one not generally known, is of two men about to be hanged, in those days when the executions were in public.

There was a great crowd assembled, when some bullocks, being driven to market, became unmanageable and, rushing through the mass of onlookers, gored persons to right and left.

Ned, on the scaffold, turned to his companion, who with him awaited the fatal drop, and remarked:

"I say, Hal, it's a good thing we're not in that crowd."

Scott abounds in genial merriment. A story of his that I have never seen quoted is of a certain captain who, when he retired on half-pay, instructed his servant to call him every morning at five o'clock, the old hour for parade. He was to say:

"Wake up, sir! It's time for parade, sir!"

Then the captain would half-rouse and reply:

"Damn the parade!" and go happily to sleep again.

I have only one grudge against English wit, and that is its fondness for puns. A poor pun is, undoubtedly, the most despicable of creations. And the pun that is really good is rare. Of puns there are three sorts: the silly, the ingenious and the brilliant. Merely silly *ad nauseam* is the remark of the dog when thrown overboard, "My bark is on the sea!" Or the advertisement of the dealer in musical instruments, who proclaimed, "I have some drums that can't be beat!" Such is Hood's jest anent the stork's standing on one leg: "What is the cause? There is no cause; storks don't caw." Or the story Lord Charles Somerset told on his return from the Cape as to how once a lion came upon him. "I ran at him," averred Lord Charles, "with all my might, and the lion ran away with all his mane."

Something better than punning lies in the retort of an indignant woman to whom a vegetarian proposed marriage.

"Go along with you! Do you think I'm going to be flesh of your flesh, and you a-living on cabbage! Marry a grass widow!"

Puns, howsoever good they may be, never persistently delight. Their charm, if such there be, is evanescent.

All the puns ever made cannot equal the constant worth of one witticism such as *Punch's* famous advice to those about to get married: "Don't!" Or that reply of the woman who, covered with bruises, was taken to a hospital in the East End of London. As she was of the masses, rather than the classes, the house surgeon at once suspected an excess of domestic arguments.

"Who did this?" he asked, pityingly; "was it your husband?"

"No, it warn't my 'usband," the woman made answer. "'E ain't that sort, 'e ain't. W'y, lor' bless ye, 'e's more like a friend nor a 'usband!"

But now, at last, patriotism rejoices, for we come to our own country. Surely, in humor, as in all else, there is no land like to our own. It is the custom to talk of American business men as having no home life, no leisure, no pleasure. We hear often of the card an American puts on his office door: "Gone to lunch—back in five minutes." The foreigner, telling of this, raises his hands in horror and prates of a nation of dyspeptics. He doesn't know the size of the lie on that card! After a thorough examination, I beg to assure the world that the American has more fun and better fun than any other man on the planet.

America is the sole truly cosmopolitan country in the world. We were cosmopolitan in our origin. Italy and Spain joined to give us birth. France fought for our freedom. England gave us her best blood. The Dutch brought their industries to our betterment. And, as the races mingled in our origin, so they have been reinforcing our native strength from that day to this. And, as in all else, so is America cosmopolitan in the making of laughter. Here Finn and Chinaman, Greek and Italian, Magyar and Manxman, and every other folk come freely, and under the blessing of happier conditions make merrier than ever they did at home.

The meditative humor of the German is as familiar here as in Potsdam.

At the funeral of her husband, the widow sighed plaintively, and said:

"If George hadn't blown into the muzzle of his gun, he might 'ave got a plenty of squirrels—it was such a good day for 'em!"

The moralizing of the Turk is equally our own:

The little girl had been naughty, and her mother bade her pray God that she might be a better girl. The daughter obeyed. When she had finished her usual petition, she added:

"And, O God, please make Nellie a good little girl." Then, with pious resignation, "Nevertheless, Thy will, not mine, be done."

Sometimes we are as cynical as the French.

Thus a man, referring to his first raptures with his wife, said that he had worshiped her, adored her, loved her, so that he would have liked to eat her. "Now," he concluded, after a pause, "I'm sorry I didn't!"

As to puns, too, we are more English than the English. Silly, ingenious and brilliant, we revel in every variety of the play on words. One verse by a popular author runs:

There was a sawyer, blind as he could be,  
But otherwise he was without a flaw;  
So blind that no one ever saw him see,  
But several hundred that have seen him saw.

Exactly like Hood's absurd and inexcusable pun concerning the storks is the question: "How many feet long was the big snake?" Answer: "One hundred and ninety-two inches—snakes have no feet."

Another, more elaborate, tells of one Smith who was a prisoner before the judge.

"What is your name?" asked the judge.

"Smith, your honor."

"Your full name?"

"Locke Smith," replied the prisoner; and, having so said, he made a bolt for the door.

He was brought back, and the judge remarked, decisively:

"Ten dollars, or ten days."

"Thanks," said Locke Smith, "I'll take the ten dollars."

Another illustration is that of the



boy who begged his mother for a kitten-chism, as the catechism was too big for him. But this, though told as original in America, must have had its source in England.

In the same punning vein, one writer insisted that Ruth treated Boaz badly because she pulled his ears and trod on his corn.

Of the jesting on ambiguities in words, where true wit helps the flavor of the punning, a concise and excellent example is this: Two men became engaged in a heated argument. Finally, one of them lost his temper and exclaimed, violently:

"I can't bear a fool!"

"No," the other answered, quietly, "but your mother could."

This biting retort is worthy of Johnson himself.

While we of America are not so persistently amiable as are the English, there is yet no lack of that genial humor wherein is no venom, or, if the venom is there, its object is impersonal and the laughter harms no one. Thus, two well-bred men were abroad in their cups, and unhappily fell into the gutter. After lying there for a time one said to the other:

"I shay, lez go to nuzzer hotel—this leaks!"

Of another drunkard it is told that when a friend questioned him as to the manner in which he avoided running into the trees of a wood through which he passed nightly on his way home, he replied, convincingly:

"Oh, that is easy. When I look at a tree I see two of them—and then I go right between them."

A housewife examined a Norwegian girl whom the intelligence office had offered as a general servant.

"I suppose you understand plain cooking?" remarked the lady of the house.

"Naw, no cooking," the girl answered.

"Heavy sweeping and housework, then, of course?"

"Naw, doan do housework."

"Perhaps you are a laundress?"

"Naw, doan launder."

"Don't you know plain sewing?"

"Naw, doan sew."

"Well, I declare," exclaimed the distracted lady, "what on earth can you do?"

"Aw," was the astonishing answer, "I can milk a reindeer."

There is, too, the incident of the tramp who called for food at a house where its mistress regarded his nose with evident suspicion. It was a nose of that sort that would not have tended to the safety of its owner in a field where fierce cattle were congregated.

"What makes your nose so red?" the woman asked.

"Mum," the tramp replied, "it's just a-glowin' with pride because it ain't stuck into other folkses' business!" And having so said, he went elsewhere in the search for food.

There was an old lady who expressed her sympathy for the boy who ran the elevator.

"Don't you git awful tired, sonny?"

"Yis, 'm," said the boy.

"What is it that's so tirin'?" was the next question. "Is it the goin' up?"

"No, 'm."

"Is it the goin' down?"

"No, 'm."

"What is it then, sonny, that makes you so tired?"

"It's the questions, 'm."

Clergymen afford even more than their fair share of amusement, without matter as to church or creed. Once, in a church near Poughkeepsie, a very short man was asked to "fill the pulpit," which chanced to be a very large one. This he agreed to do, though only in the technical, not the literal, sense, for the pulpit was far too big for him. In fact, when it came time for the sermon, the congregation could at first see nothing above the desk. At last, however, two eyes and a nose appeared, then a piping nasal voice announced:

"Be of good cheer. It is I; be not afraid."

Children rather more rarely afford entertainment in this class of stories. A little boy was asked by his mother:

"Willy, what would you like to give your cousin Johnny for his birthday?"

"I know what I'd like to give him," Willy replied, without the slightest hesitation, his fist clenched, "but I ain't big enough!"

Often in American humor and wit we find the shrewdest philosophy garbed in clownishness that fills us with laughter. Artemus Ward and Josh Billings said many things that, despite their uncouthness, were pearls of price. There was no lack of pithy sapience in Billings's observation that one hornet, if he feels well, can break up a whole camp-meeting.

Sunset Cox voiced amusingly a most melancholy truth when, after describing the Tartar custom of pulling a man by the ear to make him drink, he added:

"I know a man who doesn't have to have his ear pulled."

And there is a shrewd summary of the weariness inflicted on youth by some classical studies in a farcical anecdote of Homer. The bard was once walking in one of the seven cities in which he was born, when some vulgar little boys ran after him, and jeered at him, and threw sticks and stones at him. This at last so enraged the poet that he withdrew under a horse-shed and wrote the *Iliad*—just to get even!

This story, beyond the quality of which I have spoken, is characterized as well by the grotesque manner. This makes it typically American. I have spoken of Englishmen who excelled in the grotesque—they were exceptions. Here grotesqueness is the rule. Wild absurdity is the characteristic trait of our national humor. It permeates all classes, it thrives in every department of our activity. It is indeed universal, often, alas, wretched. And this habit of exaggeration is rampant in our fun. Many a village wit believes that his every enlargement of the truth is excruciatingly brilliant. It is a perverted taste, but it has many excuses, some that are complete. "Talk of Vesuve," exclaimed the Yankee visitor to Naples, "Niag'll put her out in three minutes." This has a humor of

its own, whether good or bad I care not to specify.

Mark Twain's humor is preëminently of a grotesque character. His mourning over the tomb of Adam is the very ideal of delightful absurdity. Once when lecturing on the Sandwich Islands he proposed to show how the cannibals ate. To that end he requested: "Will some lady kindly loan me a baby?" Again, he signs as a sentiment, with his autograph, "Never tell a lie\*.—Mark Twain." After the word "lie" is an asterisk and, referring to the bottom of the page, we find this note: "Except for practice."

Even Washington Irving, who was a classicist, could not escape the national manner. It was he who, in speaking of our national vanity, said: "Uncle Sam is of such great weight in his own opinion that he thinks that when he goes West the earth tips up."

The quaint humor of Artemus Ward was always grotesque. Thus, in his story of the accommodation train in the South, notorious for its crawling, he tells us that he at last accosted the conductor with these words:

"Please, sir, may a passenger be permitted to ask a question?"

The conductor assented with a bad grace. Artemus propounded this:

"Why don't they take the cow-catcher off from the engine and put it on the back of this hind car? I want to know what's to hinder a cow at any minute from strolling into the car and biting a passenger?"

Another story on the same subject, from a source unknown to me, is even more exaggerated. The conductor of the slow train approached an old, gray-headed man, and asked for his ticket.

"You've taken it," said the old man.

"Guess not," the conductor declared. "Where'd you get on?"

"I got on at Nachett," the old man replied.

"No, you didn't," was the indignant denial of the conductor. "Nobody got on at Nachett but one little boy."

"Yes," explained the old man, softly; "I was that little boy."

Yet, extravagant as our American

stories are, and distinctive as such grotesqueness is of our national humor, it is well to remember that this quality of arrant absurdity and exaggeration is found often elsewhere as well. Thus we find in our current American stories old Greek fragments in a new dress. There is a famous play in pseudo-logic wherein an old sophist and his pupil make a contract to the effect that the pupil is to pay the sophist for his instruction when he wins his first suit. The matter was at last brought into court, and formed the pupil's first case. Said the pupil:

"If he wins I must not pay, because, by the contract, I must pay if I win my first suit. If I win I must not pay, by order of the court."

Said the sophist:

"If I win I must be paid, for such is the order of the court. If I lose he must pay, by the terms of our contract."

Out of this story grew, surely, our story of a man's defense when charged with keeping a vicious dog that had bitten the complainant. The defendant's answer was, first the dog by which complainant was bitten was not his dog; because his dog was tied up; second, it was not his dog because his dog had no teeth; third, it was not his dog because he had no dog.

George Eliot once said that a difference in the senses of humor of husband and wife causes a great deal of

domestic unhappiness. The great danger in humor is that one may never know how his neighbor may regard his favorite jest. It is often as disappointing mentally when one makes fun for another as it was physically in the case of the man who, seeing his friend just before him in the street, was moved to advance stealthily and bat his friend's hat down over his ears, only to learn his mistake when knocked down by a stranger.

Fortunately, in this country the average of humor and the average of wit are high. Here is indeed more fun than elsewhere in the world, though there has been a habit of asserting the contrary. And the reason of our abundance lies in the fact that this land is the best of lands. There are two essentials of honest laughter, not false gaiety or scurrilous cynicism, but honest laughter, and those two conditions are fulfilled better here than elsewhere. The two conditions are intelligence and prosperity. The starving man can only laugh in the frenzy of despair; the fool can only giggle in sounds horrible to the ear. Our nation, as a whole, is one of keen intelligences quickened by sufficient education, and it is a nation of workers, whose labor brings them a swift and adequate return. Such men and women may laugh with a clear conscience, and loud and long. The echo of that laughter is one of the overtones of well-being.



## HIS CONFESSION

SHE—Tell me, darling, have you ever loved before?

HE—No; but—er—I have—er—experimented a little, now and then.



PHILOSOPHERS tell us that it is useless to argue with a stone. When at a loss for a word, however, half a brick is better than no retort.

# A MILLIONAIRE WORM

By James French Dorrance

“YOU'RE a worm, Patrick O'Connor—a crawling, wiggling, wriggling worm!”

A short, puffy, over-fleshed man stood in front of a pier glass, danced up and down, and shook his fist at himself.

“You let a bunch of petticoats run you. You eat their meals; you trot along to their parties; you make up to a lot of snobs you don't care a hang about; you go to the shows they pick out—tommy-rot every time. Why, you even quit being a Democrat because it wasn't fashionable! You're a worm, Patrick—a crawling, wiggling, wriggling worm!”

Again he danced up and down before the glass, once more he shook his fist at himself, and he scowled so that he hardly recognized his usually smiling countenance.

“You bet you are, Patrick,” he continued the exciting monologue, “you bet you're a worm! And here is where you turn!” He fairly shouted it. “Here's where you turn! Understand? Turn!”

He was in his private office, and on the edge of his big mahogany desk was a row of push-buttons by which he was supposed to summon his assistants, from office-boy to manager. Because he did not know which helper he wanted first or which button called whom, he pushed them all, pushed them hard, with the push of a determined man who is bent on having his own particular way. Then he waited impatiently.

Five years before, nagged into it by his wife and daughters, Patrick O'Connor, manufacturer of crackers, had retired from the active management of

his affairs. Having no hobbies of his own to ride, knowing little or nothing of the arts, without ambition to rise socially, caring for nothing but business and the making of dollars, he had been a lost man after his retirement. He did not know what to do with himself, and soon became as a putty figure in the hands of the three women of his household. Little by little, he lost even a semblance of authority over them. He was led as though by a ring in his nose.

It was a trifle, an inconsequential thing, that sent Patrick O'Connor into such a rage that he called himself names—nothing more nor less than fourteen million dollars.

He had not lost a fortune of that sum, nor had it suddenly dropped into his coffers. The figures represented the extent of his wealth outside of his working capital, and the fact that he was a very rich man, even as rich men go in these billionaire days, had suddenly entered into his easy-going brain.

This was the one day in the year that the millionaire had any real reason for going to the factory and opening the magnificently furnished private office which his wife had fitted up in honor of his retirement and her triumph. It was the end of the business year in the realm of crackers, and, according to his orders, a trial balance of his affairs was presented to him.

He had inspected such a balance just a year before, a balance which showed him to be worth a trifle over twelve millions. It had not roused him even to an extra drink at the club, which he reached at two o'clock, according to the daily routine in which ran his life.

Why should the effect of a fourteen-million balance have been so different? What was there in the figures that made him dance about and make faces at himself? It is a problem for a psychologist. We can only add what the Honorable Patrick said to himself that eventful morning.

"You're a rich man, Patrick," he began, when the mysterious effect of the figures permeated him. "You are a very rich man, and you're getting richer all the time. Last year it was twelve millions; this year fourteen. And what fun are you getting out of it?"

"You are rich enough to have anything you want. You can go in for horses or fast yachts or air-ships. You can even take a flyer in public libraries. You can—why, Patrick O'Connor, you can live your own life, any old life you wish! You can have your own way!"

All this he said to himself as he stamped up and down over the thick carpet of his private office. His stock of similes was as limited as his ability to enjoy his means, but the ancient one of the worm that turned came to him, and brought him up short before the glass.

He knew what he wanted to do. Never had there been any doubt in his mind what his own way was. He wanted to run his factory, to make crackers, billions of them; to sell them in a market which he forced to expand and grow. He wanted to get back into the harness, to quit loafing and end this eternal climbing after social position.

He had pressed the half-dozen buttons on his desk, and was waiting.

No one answered. Why should any one answer? The bells from the private office had not rung in five years. What could the "boss" want with the janitor, an office-boy, a stenographer? The wires were probably crossed; that accounted for their ringing this morning.

Then the bells rang again, short, sharp, impatient rings. The janitor knew that no crossing of wires would give such signals. The office-boy decided to see who was "kiddin'" him

from "de main guy's hold-out." The head stenographer told off one of her assistants to answer "that miserable bell." Even Thornton Wells, son-in-law, manager of the works, the honorable Patrick's successor, came to see what possessed "the old man."

The janitor was first to arrive, and nearly fell dead at his orders.

"You see that lookin'-glass?" growled O'Connor, gruffly, pointing out the handsome mirror to which he had lately addressed himself. "You pack that out of here!"

"Where will I take it?" asked the man.

"Take it anywhere. I don't care a rap what you do with it. Get it out of my sight. The idea of a lookin'-glass in a work-shop!"

To the office-boy: "Fill these ink-wells, and bring a bunch of pencils, sharpened."

"Where's your note-book?" he demanded of the pretty stenographer.

"Did you want to dictate a letter?" she gasped, in surprise.

"What did you suppose I rang for? I want two of you women, and bring your type-writers in. I like to hear the noise; makes me think there's something doing."

Thornton Wells, to put it mildly, was amazed at this sudden eruption of activity. Had the old man suddenly gone off his head? Had he better telephone for Mrs. O'Connor, or for his doctor?

"Beginning to-morrow, Thornton, you'll take charge of raw materials. I'm going to get back into harness and run things in here."

There was a firmness about the millionaire's tone which Thornton did not fancy. It did not invite opposition, but he ventured to protest mildly.

"Are we not running things to suit you? The factory was never in better shape, never made more money. What's the matter?"

"Nothing at all, Thornton," said O'Connor, in a somewhat gentler tone. "I'm satisfied. You've managed a lot better than I ever believed you could."



But I want to go to work. I'm tired loafing."

"But, father——"

"Now, don't begin 'fathering' me," interrupted the older man, sharply. "Here at the works we'll cut that out. You take charge of raw materials in the morning. Send Bowers to me when you relieve him."

Thornton, more amazed than ever, bowed and started out. This was a case for his wife to handle. She could wind the old man around her finger any day.

"Salary will be the same," O'Connor called after him. "I'm not trying to shorten you up."

Then he pulled off his coat, and settled down to work in earnest. He had the order clerk in with his books. "We can double this business," was his comment. He talked to three or four persons over the telephone in jerky sentences that were all business. He rattled off a dozen letters to one stenographer, and called for another one, that the first might begin transcribing at once.

He enjoyed every minute of it. It was glorious, this having something to do again. His blood tingled and jumped in his veins. His cigars—he lighted a fresh one with the last glow of the one which was smoked out—his cigars tasted better. Already, he was beginning to feel an appetite for luncheon which a dozen tonics and changes of scene had not been able to supply.

He sent for the foreman of the bakery department, a gray-haired veteran who had grown ancient with the works. The old fellow was overjoyed at O'Connor's return to business, and ventured to say so.

"What brands are we turning out now, Harker?" the owner asked.

"Well, there's the Snap-Snap, an' the Eat-Easy, an' the Cantdowithoutem, an' the Zip-Zip, an'——"

"You're forgetting the O'Connor part of it, aren't you?"

"We don't use your name any more, Mr. O'Connor," the workman explained. "We got orders to drop it

out just after you went to Europe that first time."

"Drop it out, eh? What for?"

"Well, they says as how your wife didn't like to see the family name tied to a cracker," he answered, simply. "She objected to the 'Irish Incomparables,' too, and we dropped that."

"So my wife didn't like the family name tied to a cracker?" he mused, and, turning quickly to the baker, he demanded: "Yet they were about the best crackers that ever came from an oven, weren't they?"

"None better was ever baked than the O'Connor brands," he answered, loyally, "if I do say it myself, who shouldn't."

"We'll put the name back, Harker," he said, determinedly. "We'll put it back and keep it back." He thought for a moment. "How does 'O'Connor's Dublin Dips' strike you? It'll be something new to advertise. I'll bring you the recipe to-morrow."

The old baker went out, smiling down into his collar. "The old man's come to his senses again," he said, slapping his flour-stained knees, "an' now we'll make *crackers*."

"'O'Connor's Dublin Dips.'" The millionaire repeated it to himself several times, and each time his expression was more pleased. "I'll brand New York with that from the Battery to the end of the Bronx. Belinda"—for such was his wife's name—"Belinda will spin around on her ear, and they may put me out of the club, but those crackers will be the tastiest things that ever came over."

"Why shouldn't I get some fame out of it? A man writes a book and he gets his name under the title just as big as the printer will let him. A man builds a mighty bridge, and everybody knows he built it. If one hits on a new engine, an air-ship, a system of wireless telegraphy, a new disease or a cure for an old one, he gives it his name. That's fame. I'm good at nothing but crackers, and, Belinda or no Belinda, posterity is going to know it. I'm going to have my bundle of fame, if I have to pay for it at regular

advertising rates. I'm going to raise a dust, if it's only cracker dust."

He got the lithographer by telephone, and demanded poster designs for four- eight- and sixteen-sheet "paper." "Have an Irish maid smiling down from the corner of it," he advised, "and make the O'Connor large. You can't get the letters too high."

He chuckled with glee as he planned a surprise for his wife. It involved purchasing an entire page of a certain journal of fashion, which regularly chronicled the comings and goings of the set in which his wife and daughters moved. This page should cry out the many merits of the new cracker, "O'Connor's Dublin Dips."

"That will pay 'em up for draggin' me to Europe the first time!" he exclaimed, joyously.

He secured other publicity for the new cracker that afternoon, not less than half a page in every newspaper that ran a society column. "The half-page in *The Star* squares us for four Winters at Palm Beach," he figured. "That half-page in *The Crescent* may remind them that they've kited me from pillar to post for four Summer seasons. One half-page in *The Cross* is a receipt for two hundred nights at the grand opera, when I might have been snoozing at home with me pipe." The Irish would crop out now and then, and always when he thought of his pipe.

And so it went, through the entire list of dailies. They had danced, his wife and daughters, and now they must pay the piper in cracker publicity.

He was driven home that afternoon in his faultlessly appointed automobile, a contented, self-satisfied, happy man. He felt ten years younger and almost like shouting as the driver turned in from Riverside Drive, and left him at the entrance of his marble palace.

He rang for a servant to ask about his wife.

"Mrs. Addison Stewart's reception, this afternoon, sir," explained the under-butler who was on duty.

He went to his rooms and found Alphonse laying out his evening clothes. Alphonse was a particularly bitter pill. He had been swallowed under protest in the general weakness that had marked his behavior in the five long years of subjection.

The French valet certainly did not enter into the new scheme of life which had begun so auspiciously. O'Connor did not even bother to ask what affair he was expected to attend that evening.

"Alphonse," he said, "I'm not going to need you any longer. My boy up at Yale needs one of you. Go to him, if you like."

And he handed the astonished man a card on which he had scribbled:

DEAR JOHN:

A valet for you. I've gone back to work, and will dress myself in the future.

FATHER.

He found his way presently to the loft above the great ball-room, in which were stored the few relics of the past which he had been able to keep. He was looking for an old, sadly worn suit of frieze which had covered him in his first stormy days in America, days when he had sold Bibles and prayer-books from a push-cart.

He came across it finally in the bottom of an old trunk, and rejoiced. He lived over the struggle days which brought him the stake to start a bakery. He fought the fight over again which made the bakery expand into a modest cracker factory, and the factory into the producer of millions which he now owned.

Finally, he climbed into the old suit. He had grown somewhat stouter, and it was an extremely tight fit, but he put up with the inconvenience.

Then he remembered that dinner would be along in an hour or so. Long since he had given up trying to get his favorite dishes into the menu. But that was before he had gone back to work.

"What are you going to have for dinner to-night?" he demanded of the huge English butler, the tyrant of the establishment.

"Madame ordered dinner before she went out, sir."

"Well, what did she order?"

The butler brought him the menu, carefully written out in the angular hand of fashion which Belinda had acquired with difficulty.

"Bah! It's French from beginning to end. Send up the cook!"

Amazed at the summons, but hardly daring to disobey, monsieur of the white cap came above stairs.

"We are going to have a civilized dinner to-night," began O'Connor, briskly. "Chop out all these *à la* mixtures and give us a potato soup, a big, fat beefsteak, some corned beef and cabbage, and a pie. Understand?"

But the Frenchman did not understand, as he spoke no English. O'Connor knew no French, and the butler was too surprised to interpret.

"Tell him to take a vacation," said O'Connor, finally, in despair; "and send Mary to me."

Mary was a relic of less prosperous days, when one servant was all they could afford. She was one of the reminders his wife would have put out of sight, had he not insisted on retaining her.

"Do you suppose, Mary," he said, with a twinkle in his steel-gray eyes, "that you could manage to cook a good, old-fashioned dinner to-night?—the kind we used to have when we lived in a flat; plenty of potatoes——"

"And corned beef," interrupted Mary, her old face lighting up.

"And don't forget the cabbage and beefsteak."

Mary departed at once to try her hand at the dinner, and O'Connor sat down to await the final storm of his little insurrection, the completion of his triumph over the domination of his fashion-mad "women folks."

Not for a moment did he doubt the issue. He had found himself, caught his stride, and all the wives and daughters in Christendom could not have made him lose a step. He looked forward to the coming of his "women folks" with a keen relish, and

he could not understand why he had submitted so meekly in the past. He was not sorry, though. If he had not submitted he would never have known the joy of this day of rebellion.

He heard the swish of their skirts in the hall as they came in from the reception at six o'clock. But the supreme moment was not yet. They rushed off to their rooms and their maids, to be done over for the evening party that was to come. He puffed at his pipe contentedly. He could afford to wait.

A Normandy chime in the hall was striking eight when his wife entered the library. She was a stunning matron, and Worth had outdone himself on her gown. A queen might have envied her diamonds, and even more her stately carriage.

She did not see him when she first came into the room, but, when she did, and observed that he had not dressed for dinner, she pounced upon him.

"Well, of all the slovenly, lazy, good-for-nothing, disgusting men, Patrick O'Connor, you are positively the worst," she cried. "Eight o'clock, and not dressed yet! What has got into you?"

Patrick chuckled. What had got into him, indeed? He didn't know and he didn't care, so long as it remained with him.

"I'm not going to dress," he growled, without removing the pipe from his mouth.

"Not going to dress? The idea! You know this is the night of the cotillion for the Russian duke. Do you think you can go in that outlandish garb?"

"Not going to no cotillion," he growled again.

She was beginning to be angry with him. The tapping of her foot against the fender showed it, and the fire that had made him tremble so many times was in her eye.

"Now, you get up from that couch, and let Alphonse rush you into your evening clothes," she commanded.

"Alphonse is gone!" he said, chuckling.

"Alphonse gone?" she cried.

"Sent him up to Yale. John may find use for him, but the old man's going to dress himself after this."

"What do you mean by sending him away without consulting me?" she demanded, not yet realizing that the downtrodden one whom she had long ruled so easily had risen and was in a state of most active insurrection. "How will you ever dress for the dance?"

He got up then, and faced her, his short, stout legs spread apart, his chubby hands deep in the pockets of his coat, an attitude she particularly despised.

"Belinda," he began, in sharp tones, hard as steel, in a voice she did not know, and at which she wondered. "Belinda, it's all up. Your jig is danced. The deal is closed. From this time on I'm running things."

His daughter, the beautiful Laura, entered the room and started at the significance of their attitudes, but O'Connor did not even pause.

"I've been a worm, and I've done lots of fool things because you drove me to them, but I've turned. Understand? Turned!"

"Has the man gone mad, mother?" demanded Laura, the haughty. "Look at his clothes!"

"That's quite enough from you, young woman," he snapped, his jaws closing on the words like a steel trap. "Another disrespectful word and you go to bed without your supper."

She did not understand, and could not explain this dreadful change in parental attitude. For the moment, she was quite subdued.

"Yes," continued the tyrant, who had found himself, "I'm going to run things here and at the factory. Took charge to-day. Put Thornton at raw materials, and planned a lot of new business."

"But the cotillion, Patrick," his wife protested, shrilly. "I'm on the receiving line, and Laura is to dance with the duke. You've simply got to go."

"Got to go, is it? Got to? Got to?"

Belinda, don't you ever say 'got to' to me again. I'll give out all the got-to orders, and here's the first one: You have got to stay home from the cotillion and amuse me!"

Laura forgot her pose as the cold and haughty one, and began to cry like any flesh-and-blood girl of nineteen deprived suddenly of the finest dance of the year, to say nothing of a most marriageable aristocrat.

"Stop it!" commanded the tyrant. "Your sister and Thornton can take you to the cotillion. Tell them your ma was sick."

The matron winced at the homely word, but in her heart there was a slight glow, for it reminded her of the love days, the bitter-sweet struggle days of push-cart and bakery, when the love of the fat, puffy Patrick was above everything else, and she had no ambition but to make him happy.

The conversation at dinner was decidedly limited—one question from the matron and a most respectful answer from the butler. The question came with the soup, a thick, potato soup, Irish to the last drop, old Mary's pride.

"But I ordered consommé, Haverstraw!" she protested. "How comes this awful mixture?"

"The master reordered the dinner, madame," answered the butler.

That was all there was to it, except that O'Connor had three helpings of soup and Laura left the table when the corned beef and cabbage were served. It was entirely too gross for her finishing-school taste.

"You'll find me in the library, Belinda, when you've removed yourself from that creation and got into something comfortable," he said, as they finished the silent meal. His voice was soft now, and full of hints of good humor, but there was something in his eye which told her it would be useless to protest farther.

There was one world left for him to conquer on this day of days, one will yet to be broken, and he looked forward to it with positive joy. He did not have to wait long, for Ethel, the

eldest daughter, was wild with indignation and anger at the transference of her husband to a subordinate place in the works. She had long been a particular thorn in O'Connor's side. She excelled them all in planning social tortures for him, and in preventing his escape. Her ambitions had started it all, and without her iron hand the mother would never have succeeded in subjugating him. She was to be broken that evening as on a wheel.

In full regalia and paint of social war, she swooped down on him before his cigar was half finished. The first five minutes were entirely her own. She filled them with a shocking tirade, full of fierce invective, and ended with a threat of a commission to inquire into his sanity, with a prearranged verdict of confinement in a private asylum for life.

"You wouldn't send your poor old father to the mad-house? You wouldn't do that, would you, Ethel?" he begged, with well-feigned fear, at which he chuckled inwardly.

"That is just what we will do!" she cried. "We'll send you to the mad-house to-morrow, if you don't give Thornton the factory and quit trying to run things here at home."

He played with her a little longer, but she would admit of no alternative. It was the mad-house or submission. When he tired of the game, of the exhibition of her scorn; when he had proved her utter lack of filial love or respect, he turned tyrant again.

Calling a servant, he commanded that his wife and daughter and Ethel's husband be summoned immediately. While waiting, he seized a poker and held it in the coals of the fireplace. It was red hot when his wife, who was the last to come, appeared.

The four against whom he had taken his stand were on one side of the fireplace. In the hard-wood floor he seared a line with the red-hot poker. Then, with great dignity, he took his station with the line between him and his family.

"Makes an ugly scar, doesn't it,

that line?" he began. "It stands for the division in this family, which is an ugly thing in itself. It is going to be wiped out, or the family is. Now it is for you to decide which it will be.

"The crossing of that line means something to each of you. For you, Belinda, it means that you love your husband and that you are going to do your duty as a wife first, and get into the Carstens' set afterward. For you, Laura, it means the obedience which you owe your father as long as you are under my roof. Ethel's crossing stands for a cessation of interference in my immediate affairs, and Thornton's, that he is delighted with the chance to rustle with raw materials at twenty-five thousand dollars a year."

He took out his watch. "You have five minutes in which to decide. All who have not crossed in that time will leave this house, never to return."

It was Ethel who attempted to marshal the opposition. She rushed over to her mother, and began to plead with her.

"Stand against him, mother dear! Don't cross his horrid old line. It's plain that he is crazy. We must send for the doctors, and have him locked up. He can't turn you out, if you will just be firm. Talk to him as you used to do. Bring him to his senses."

"It would be no use, my dear child," the mother said, slowly. "You don't know him as I do. When he takes a stand like this, it is no use fighting against him."

"But if he is crazy, mother, and the doctors will say he is, you can shut him up and divorce——"

The mother sprang to her feet. "Ethel, don't speak of such a thing! He is not crazy; he's just his old self. And divorce—why, why, I love him! I do love him, as I did the night he carried me out of the Hibernian ball, and off to the parish house and the priest, whether I would or no. Patrick!" she cried; "dear old Pat!" And she was across the line and into his arms.

"I was just a-bluffing," he con-



fessed, when the three rebellious ones had followed her; for they had followed slowly, a little sheepishly. "Want to go to that cotillion, Belinda?" he asked.

"I'd rather stay here with you," she said, running her fingers through

his grizzled hair for the first time in years.

"And I'd rather you would," he chuckled. "We'll figure out a recipe for 'Dublin Dips,' the cracker that is to make all New York smack its lips. You children get along to the party!"



## A WOMAN'S CALCULATION

"WHAT! you're not going to smoke another cigar this evening, Henry?" said Mrs. Glibb to her husband.

"Yes, I am."

"And how many will that make since morning?"

"Oh, six, or possibly eight."

"You average six a day, don't you?"

"Perhaps so."

"And they cost you ten cents each by the box?"

"They do."

"Well, now, let me see: we have been married sixteen years, and you have smoked all of that time. Six cigars a day at ten cents each, leaving out Sunday, amount to sixty cents a day—or four dollars and twenty cents a week—or two hundred and eighteen dollars and forty cents a year, for sixteen years, which amounts to three thousand, four hundred and ninety-four dollars and forty cents. And now, if you had put four dollars and twenty cents a week into the savings bank for sixteen years, the interest and compound interest added to the principal would have amounted to simply thousands and thousands of dollars, and we would have had a roof of our own over our heads, and I could have had my sealskin and my silks and velvets as well as other women whose husbands never touch tobacco in any shape or form, having too much regard for the welfare of their families to indulge in any such selfish pleasure. And I wouldn't have to sit and blush for shame, every time we have callers, because of the parlor carpet being so faded and threadbare, and every chair in need of being upholstered, and the curtains all patched and darned, and my best house-gown made out of an old silk that was my best dress for three years before I made a house-dress of it. And I could sport my diamond ring or two and my pearls, like other women. And, when I made formal calls I could hire a carriage, like Mrs. Dresser, whose husband does not smoke eight or nine nasty cigars a day, and I could have a silk-founced underskirt, as my sister Fannie has; but I can't have it because my husband must smoke his ten or twelve cigars a day. Sister Fannie got herself an eighteen-dollar hat yesterday and a feather boa that cost twenty dollars, and a ten-dollar fan, and not one of them could she have had if her husband smoked fourteen or fifteen cigars a day for his own selfish pleasure, and— Oh, well, go to the club if you will! A man who smokes twenty cigars a day is apt to prefer the club to the peace and quiet of his own home. What trouble this miserable tobacco does bring into the world!"

J. L. HARBOUR.